



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES

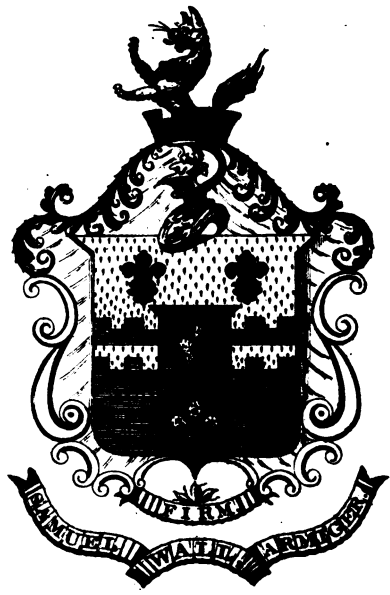


3 3433 07492758 7

38



38





•

1

1

1



Printed by R. and A. Taylor, Shoe Lane, London.

BELINDA.

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

A prudence undeceiving, undeceived,
That nor too little nor too much believed;
That scorned unjust suspicion's coward fear,
And without weakness knew to be sincere.

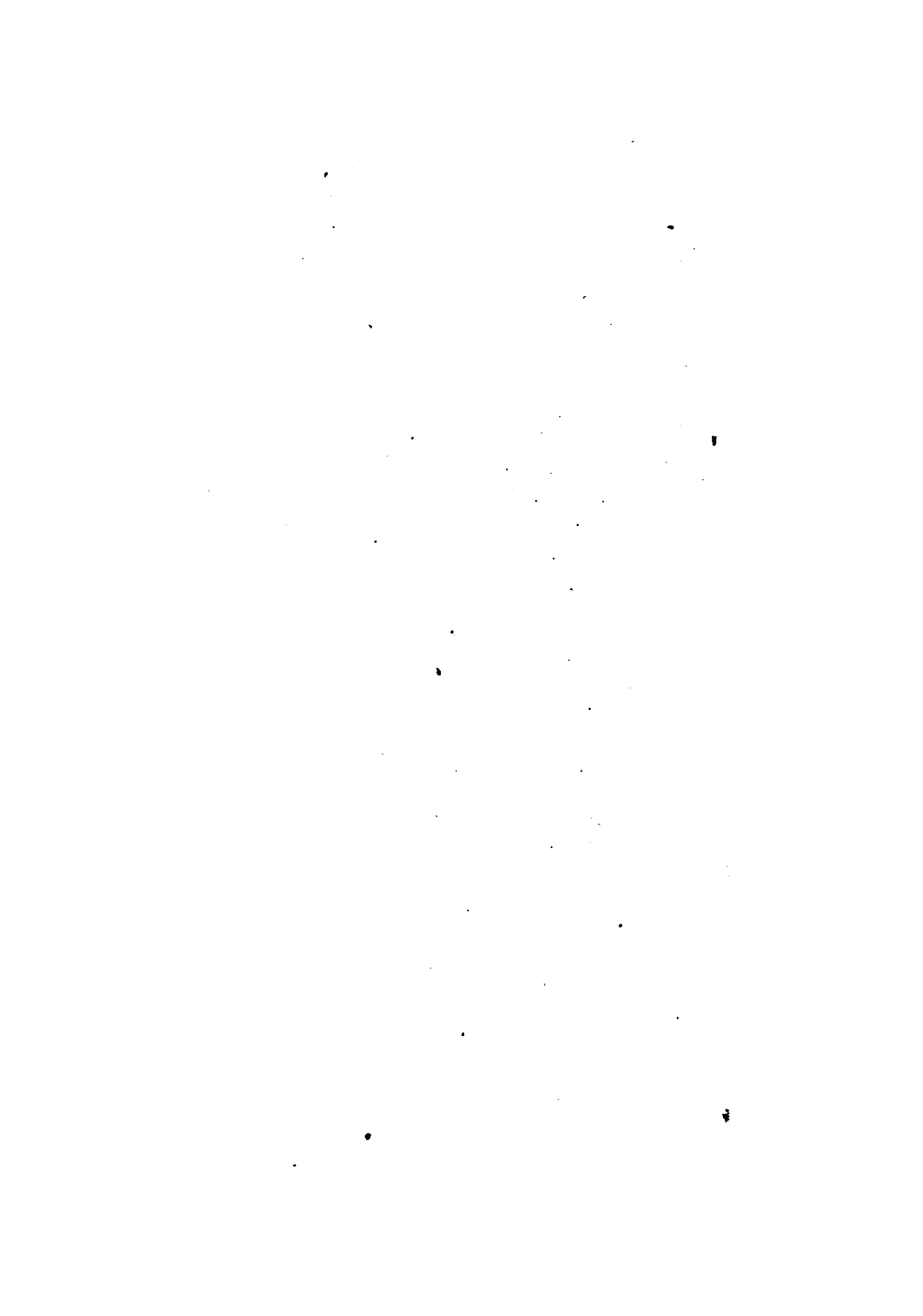
LORD LYTTLETON'S MONODY ON HIS WIFE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

45





BELINDA.

CHAPTER XXI.

HELENA.

WHILST they were at breakfast the next morning in Lady Delacour's dressing-room, Marriott knocked at the door, and immediately opening it, exclaimed in a joyful tone, Miss Portman, they're eating it! M^aam, they're eating it as fast as ever they can!

Bring them in; your lady will give you leave, Marriott, I fancy, said Miss Portman. Marriott brought in her gold fishes; some green leaves were floating on the top of the water in the glass globe.

See, my lady, said she, what Miss Portman has been so good to bring from Oakly Park for my poor gold fish, who, I am sure, ought to be much obliged to her, as well as myself. Marriott set the globe beside her lady, and retired.

From Oakly Park! And by what name impossible to pronounce, must I call these green leaves, to please botanic ears? said Lady Delacour.

This, replied Belinda, is what

Th' unlearned, duckweed; learned, lemna, call,

and it is to be found in any ditch or standing pool.

And what possessed you, my dear, for the sake of Marriott and her gold fishes, to trouble yourself to bring such stuff a hundred and seventy miles?

To oblige little Charles Percival, said Miss Portman. He was anxious to keep his promise of sending it to your Helena. She found out in some book that she was reading with him last summer, that gold fishes are fond of this plant; and I wish, added Belinda in a timid voice, that she were here at this instant to see them eat it!

Lady Delacour was silent for some minutes, and kept her eyes steadily upon the gold fishes. At length she said, I never shall forget how well the poor little creature behaved about those gold fishes. I grew amazingly fond of her whilst she was with me. But you know circumstanced as I was, after you left me I could not have her at home.

But now I am here, said Belinda, will she be any trouble to you? And will she not make your home more agreeable to you and to Lord Delacour, who was evidently very fond of her?

Ah! my dear, said Lady Delacour, you forget, and so do I at times, what I have to go through. It is in vain to talk, to think of making home, or any place, or any thing, or any person agreeable to me now. What am I? The outside rind is left—the sap is gone. The tree lasts from day to day by miracle—it cannot last long. You would not wonder to hear me talk in this way, if you knew the terrible night I had last night after we parted. But I have these nights constantly now. Let us talk of something else. What have you there? A manuscript?

Yes, a little journal of Edward Percival's, which he sent for the entertainment of Helena.

Lady Delacour stretched out her hand for it.

The boy will write as like his father as possible, said she, turning over the leaves. I wish to have this poor girl with me—but I have not spirits. And you know, whenever Lord Delacour can find a house that will suit us, we shall leave town, and I could not take Helena with me. But this may be the last opportunity I may ever have of seeing her; and I *can* refuse you nothing, my dear. So, will you go for her? She can stay with us a few days. Lady Boucher, that most convenient dowager, who likes going about, no matter where, all morning, will go with you to Mrs. Dumont's academy in Sloane Street. I would as soon go to a bird-fancier's as to a boarding-school for young ladies. Indeed, I am not well enough to go any where. So I will throw myself upon a sofa, and read this child's journal. I wonder how that or any thing else can interest me now.

Belinda, who had been used to the variations of Lady Delacour's spirits, was not much alarmed by the despondent strain in which she now spoke, especially when she considered that the thoughts of the dreadful trial this unfortunate woman was soon to go through must naturally depress her courage. Rejoiced at the permission that she had obtained to go for Helena, Miss Portman sent immediately to Lady Boucher, who took her to Sloane Street.

Now, my dear considerate Miss Portman, said Lady Boucher, I must beg and request that you will hurry Miss Delacour into the carriage as fast as possible. I have not a moment to spare; for I am to be at a china auction at two, that I would not miss for the whole world. Well, what's the matter with the people? Why does not James knock at the door? Can't the man read? Can't the man see? cried the purblind dowager. Is not that Mrs. Dumont's name on the door before his eyes?

No, ma'am, I believe this name is Ellicott, said Belinda.

Ellicott is it? Aye, true. But what's the man stopping for then? Mrs. Dumont's is the next door, tell the blind dunce. Mercy on us! to waste one's time in this way! I shall, as sure as fate, be too late for the china auction. What upon earth stops us?

Nothing but a little covered cart which stands at Mrs. Dumont's door. There, now it is going; an old man is drawing it out of the way as fast as he can.

Open the coach door, James! cried Lady Boucher the moment that they had drawn up. Now, my dear considerate Miss Portman, remember the auction, and don't let Miss Delacour stay to change her dress or any thing.

Belinda promised not to detain her ladyship a minute. The door at Mrs. Dumont's was open, and a servant was assisting an old man to carry in some geraniums and balsams out of the covered cart which had stopped the way. In the hall a crowd of children were gathered round a high stand, on which they were eagerly arranging their flower-pots; and the busy hum of voices was so loud, that when Miss Portman first went in, she could neither hear the servant, nor make him hear her name. Nothing was to be heard but O, how beautiful! O, how sweet; That's mine! That's yours! The great rose geranium for Miss Jefferson! The white Provence rose for Miss Adderly! No, indeed, Miss Pococke, that's for Miss Delacour; the old man said so.

'*Silence, silence, mesdemoiselles!*' cried the voice of a French woman, and all was silence. The little crowd looked towards the hall-door; and from the midst of her companions, Helena Delacour, who now caught a glimpse of Belinda, sprang forward,

throwing down her white Provence rose as she passed.

Lady Boucher's compliments, ma'am, said the servant to Mrs. Dumont, she's in indispensable haste, and she begs you won't let Miss Delacour think of changing her dress.

It was the last thing of which Miss Delacour was likely to think at this instant. She was so much overjoyed, when she heard that Belinda was come by her mamma's desire to take her home, that she would scarcely stay whilst Mrs. Dumont was tying on her straw hat, and exhorting her to let Lady Delacour know how it happened that she was 'so far from fit to be seen.'

Yes, ma'am ; yes, ma'am ; I'll remember ; I'll be sure to remember, said Helena tripping down the steps. But just as she was getting into the carriage, she stopped at the sight of the old man, and exclaimed,

O, good old man ! I must not forget you.

Yes, indeed, you must though, my dear Miss Delacour, said Lady Boucher, pulling her into the carriage. 'Tis no time to think of good old men now.

But I must. Dear Miss Portman, will you speak for me ? I must pay—I must settle—and I have a great deal to say.

Miss Portman desired the old man to call in Berkley Square at Lady Delacour's ; and this satisfying all parties they drove away.

When they arrived in Berkley Square, Marriott told them that her lady was just gone to lie down. Edward Percival's little journal, which she had been reading, was left on the sofa, and Belinda gave it to Helena, who eagerly began to look over it. Thirteen pages ! O, how good he has been to write so much for me ! said she ; and she had al-

most finished reading it before her mother came into the room.

Lady Delacour shrunk back as her daughter ran towards her ; for she recollected too well the agony she had once suffered from an embrace of Helena's. The little girl appeared more grieved than surprised at this : and after kissing her mother's hand ; without speaking, she again looked down at the manuscript.

Does that engross your attention so entirely, my dear, said Lady Delacour, that you can neither spare one word nor one look for your mother ?

O mamma ! I only tried to read, because I thought you were angry with me.

An odd reason for trying to read, my dear ! said Lady Delacour with a smile : have you any better reason for thinking I was angry with you ?

Ah, I know you are not angry now, for you smile, said Helena ; but I thought at first that you were, mamma, because you gave me only your hand to kiss.

Only my hand—the next time, simpleton ! I'll give you only my foot to kiss, said her ladyship, sitting down and holding out her foot playfully.

Her daughter threw aside the book, and kneeling down kissed her foot, saying in a low voice, Dear mamma, I never was so happy in my life ; for you never looked so very, *very* kindly at me before.

Do not judge always of the kindness people feel for you, child, by their looks ; and remember that it is *possible* a person might have felt more than you could guess by their looks. Pray now, Helena, you who are such a good judge of physiognomy, should you guess that I was dying, by my looks ?

The little girl laughed, and repeated, *Dying?*—O no, mamma.

O no! because I have such a fine colour in my cheeks—Hey?

Not for that reason, mamma, said Helena withdrawing her eyes from her mother's face.

What, then you know rouge already when you see it?—You perceive some difference, for instance, between Miss Portman's colour and mine? Upon my word, you are a nice observer. Such nice observers are sometimes dangerous to have near one.

I hope, mother, said Helena, that you do not think I would try to find out any thing that you wish, or that I imagined you wished, I should not know?

I do not understand you, child, cried Lady Delacour, raising herself suddenly upon the sofa, and looking full in her daughter's face.

Helena's colour rose to her temples; but, with a firmness that surprised even Belinda, she repeated what she had said nearly in the same words.

Do you understand her, Miss Portman? said Lady Delacour.

She expresses, I think, said Belinda, a very honourable sentiment, and one that is easily understood.

Ay, in general, certainly, said Lady Delacour, checking herself; but I thought that she meant to allude to something in particular—that was what I did not understand. Undoubtedly, my dear, you have just expressed a very honourable sentiment, and one that I should scarcely have expected from a child of your age.

Helena, my dear! said her mother, after a silence of some minutes, Did you ever read the Arabian Tales?—Yes, mamma, I know must be the answer.

But do you remember the story of Zobeide, who carried the porter home with her, on condition that let him hear or see what he might, he would ask no questions?

Yes, mamma.

On the same conditions should you like to stay with me for a few days?

Yes. On any conditions, mamma, I should like to stay with you.

Agreed then, my dear! said Lady Delacour. And now let us go to the gold fishes, and see them eat lemna, or whatever you please to call it.

Whilst they were looking at the gold fishes, the old man who had been desired by Miss Portman to call, arrived. Who is this fine gray haired old man? said Lady Delacour. Helena, who did not know the share which Belinda's aunt and her own mother had in the transaction, began with great eagerness to tell the history of the poor gardener, who had been cheated by some fine ladies out of his aloe, &c. She then related how kind Lady Anne Percival and her aunt Margaret had been to this old man; that they had gotten him a place as a gardener at Twickenham; and that he had pleased the family to whom he was recommended so much by his good behaviour, that, as they were leaving their house, and obliged to part with him, they had given him all the geraniums and balsams out of the green-house of which he had the care, and these he had been this day selling to the young ladies at Mrs. Dumont's. I received the money for him, and I was just going to pay him, said Helena, when Miss Portman came; and that put every thing else out of my head. May I go and give him his money now, mamma?

He can wait a few minutes, said Lady Delacour, who had listened to this story with much embar-

rassment and impatience. Before you go, Helena, favour us with the names of *the fine ladies who cheated* this old gardener out of his aloe?

Indeed, mamma, I don't know their names.

No!—Did you never ask Lady Anne Percival, or your aunt Margaret?—Look in my face, child! Did they never inform you?

No, ma'am, never. I once asked Lady Anne, and she said that she did not choose to tell me; that it would be of no use to me to know.

I give Lady Anne Percival more credit and more thanks for this, cried Lady Delacour, than for all the rest. I see she has not attempted to lower me in my child's opinion. I am the fine lady, Helena—I was the cause of his being cheated—I was intent upon *the noble end* of outshining a certain Mrs. Luttridge—the *noble means* I left to others, and the means have proved worthy of the end. I deserve to be brought to shame for my folly; yet my being ashamed will do nobody any good but myself. Restitution is in these cases the best proof of repentance. Go, Helena, my love! settle your little affairs with this old man, and bid him call here again to-morrow: I will see what we can do for him.

Lord Delacour had this very morning sent home to her ladyship a handsome diamond ring, which had been intended as a present for Mrs. Luttridge, and which he imagined would therefore be peculiarly acceptable to his lady. In the evening, when his lordship asked her how she liked the ring, which he desired the jeweller to leave for her to look at, she answered, that it was a handsome ring, but that she hoped he had not purchased it for her.

It is not actually bought, my dear, said his lordship; but if it suits your fancy, I hope you will do me the honour to wear it for my sake.

I will wear it for your sake, my lord, said Lady Delacour, if you desire it; and as a mark of your regard it is agreeable—but as to the rest—

My taste for diamonds now is o'er,
The sparkling baubles please no more.

If you wish to do me a kindness, I will tell you what I should like much better than diamonds, though I know it is rather ungracious to dictate the form and fashion of a favour. But as my dictatorship in all human probability cannot last much longer——

O, my dear Lady Delacour! I must not hear you talk in this manner: your dictatorship, as you call it, will I hope last many, many happy years. But to the point—What should you like better, my dear, than this foolish ring?

Her ladyship then expressed her wish that a small annuity might be settled upon a poor old man, whom she said she had unwittingly injured. She told the story of the rival galas and the aloe, and concluded by observing, that her lord was in some measure called upon to remedy part of the unnumbered ills which had sprung from her hatred of Mrs. Luttridge, as he had originally been the cause of her unextinguishable ire. Lord Delacour was flattered by this hint, and the annuity was immediately promised to the old gardener.

In talking to this old man afterward, Lady Delacour found, that the family in whose service he lately lived, had a house at Twickenham that would just answer her purpose. Lord Delacour's inquiries had hitherto been unsuccessful; he was rejoiced to find what he wanted just as he was giving up the search. The house was taken, and the old man was hired as gardener—a circumstance which seemed to give him almost as much pleasure as the annuity; for there was a morcello cherry-tree

in the garden which had succeeded the aloe in his affection: it would have grieved him sorely, he said, to leave his favourite tree to strangers, after all the pains he had been at in *netting* it to keep off the birds.

As the period approached when her fate was to be decided, Lady Delacour's courage seemed to rise; and at the same time her anxiety, that her secret should not be discovered, appeared to increase.

If I survive *this business*, said she, it is my firm intention to appear in a new character, or rather to assert my real character. I will break through the spell of dissipation—I will at once cast off all the acquaintance that are unworthy of me—I will, in one word, go with you, my dear Belinda! to Mr. Percival's. I can bear to be mortified for my good; and I am willing, since I find that Lady Anne Percival has behaved generously to me with regard to Helena's affections—I am willing that the recovery of my moral health should be attributed to the salubrious air of Oakly Park. But it would be inexpressible, intolerable mortification to me, to have it said or suspected in the world of fashion, that I retreated from the ranks disabled instead of disgusted. A voluntary retirement is graceful and dignified; a forced retreat is awkward and humiliating. You must be sensible that I could not endure to have it whispered—Lady Delacour now sets up for being a prude, because she can no longer be a coquette. Lady Delacour would become the subject of witticisms, epigrams, caricatures without end. It would just be the very thing for Mrs. Luttridge; then she would revenge herself without mercy for *the ass and her panniers*. We should have Lord and Lady D—, or The Domestic Tête-a-Tête, or The Reformed Amazon,

stuck up in a print-shop window! Oh, my dear! think of seeing such a thing! I should die with vexation, and of all deaths that is the death I should like the least.

Though Belinda could not entirely enter into those feelings, which thus made Lady Delacour invent wit against herself, and anticipate caricatures; yet she did every thing in her power to calm her ladyship's apprehensions of a discovery.

My dear, said Lady Delacour, I have perfect confidence in Lord Delacour's promise, and in his good nature, of which he has within these few days given me proofs that are not lost upon my heart: but he is not the most discreet man in the world. Whenever he is anxious about any thing, you may read it a mile off in his eyes, nose, mouth, and chin. And to tell you all my fears in one word, Marriott informed me this morning that *the Luttridge*, who came from Harrowgate to Rantipole to meet Lord Delacour, finding that there was no drawing him to her, has actually brought herself to town.

To town!—At this strange time of year! How will my lord resist this unequivocal, unprecedented proof of passion?—If she catch hold of him again, I am undone. Or, even suppose him firm as a rock, her surprise, her jealousy, her curiosity, will set all engines at work, to find out by what witchcraft I have taken my husband from her. Every precaution that prudence could devise against her malicious curiosity I have taken.—Marriott, you know, is above all temptation.—That vile wretch (naming the person whose quack medicines had nearly destroyed her), that vile wretch will be silent from fear, for his own sake. He is yet to be paid and dismissed. That should have been done long ago, but I had not money both for him and Mrs. Franke the milliner. She is now paid; and Lord Delacour—

I am glad to tell his friend how well he deserves her good opinion—Lord Delacour in the handsomest manner supplied me with the means of satisfying this man. He is to be here at three o'clock to-day; and this is the last interview he will ever have with Lady Delacour in *the mysterious boudoir*.

The fears which her ladyship expressed of Mrs. Luttridge's malicious curiosity were not totally without foundation—Champfort was at work for her and for himself. The memorable night of Lady Delacour's overturn, and the bustle that Marriott made about the key of the boudoir, were still fresh in his memory; and he was in hopes that, if he could discover the mystery, he should at once regain his power over Lord Delacour, reinstate himself in his lucrative place, and obtain a handsome reward, or, more properly speaking, bribe, from Mrs. Luttridge. The means of obtaining information of all that passed in Lady Delacour's family were, he thought, still in his power, though he was no longer an inmate of the house. The *stupid maid* was not so stupid as to be impenetrable to the voice of flattery, or, as Mr. Champfort called it, the voice of love. He found it his interest to court, and she her pleasure to be courted. On these coquettes of the *second* table,—on these underplots in the drama, much of the comedy and some of the tragedy of life depend. Under the unsuspected mask of stupidity this worthy mistress of our intriguing valet-de-chambre concealed the quick ears of a listener, and the demure eyes of a spy. Long however did she listen, and long did she spy in vain, till at last Mr. Champfort gave her notice in writing, that his love would not last another week unless she could within that time contrive to satisfy his curiosity; and that, in short, she *must* find out the reason why the boudoir was always

locked, and why Mrs. Marriott alone was to be trusted with the key. Now it happened that this billet-doux was received on the very day appointed for Lady Delacour's last interview with the quack surgeon in the mysterious boudoir. Marriott, as it was her custom on such occasions, let the surgeon in, and showed him up the back stairs into the boudoir, locked the door, and bade him wait there till her lady came. The man had not been punctual to the hour appointed; and Lady Delacour, giving up all expectation of his coming till the next day, had retired to her bed-chamber, where she of late usually at this hour secluded herself to read methodistical books, or to sleep. Marriott, when she went up to let her lady know that *the person*, as she always called him, was come, found her so fast asleep that she thought it a pity to waken her, as she had not slept at all the preceding night. She shut the door very softly, and left her lady to repose. At the bottom of the stairs she was met by *the stupid maid*, whom she immediately dispatched with orders to wash some lace—Your lady's asleep, said she, and pray let me have no running up and down stairs. The room into which the stupid maid went was directly underneath the boudoir; and whilst she was there she thought that she heard the steps of a man's foot walking over head. She listened more attentively—she heard them again. She armed herself with a glass of jelly in her hand, *for my lady*, and hurried up stairs instantly to *my lady's* room. She was much surprised to see my lady fast asleep. Her astonishment at finding that Mrs. Marriott had told her the truth was such, as for a moment to bereave her of all presence of mind, and she stood with the door ajar in her hand. As thus she stood she was roused by the sound of some one clearing his throat

very softly in the boudoir—*His* throat—for she recollected the footsteps she had heard before, and she was convinced it could be no other than a masculine throat. She listened again, and stooped down to try whether any feet could be seen under the door. As she was in this attitude, her lady suddenly turned on her bed, and the book which she had been reading fell from the pillow to the floor with a noise that made the listener start up instantaneously in great terror. The noise, however, did not waken Lady Delacour, who was in that dead sleep which is sometimes the effect of laudanum. The noise was louder than what could have been made by the fall of a book alone, and the girl descried a key that had fallen along with the book. It occurred to her, that this might possibly be the key of the boudoir. From one of those irresistible impulses which some people make an excuse for doing whatever they please, she seized it, resolved at all hazards to open the mysterious door. She was cautiously putting the key into the key-hole, so as not to make the least noise, when she was suddenly startled by a voice behind her, which said, Who gave you leave to open that door?

She turned, and saw Helena standing at the half open bed-chamber door.

Mercy, Miss Delacour!—Who thought of seeing you!—For God's sake, don't make a noise to waken my lady.

Did my mother desire you to go into that room? repeated Helena.

Dear me! No, miss, said the maid, putting on her stupid face. But I only thought to open the door to let in a little air to freshen the room, which my lady always likes, and bids me to do—and I thought——

Helena took the key gently from her hand without listening to any more of her thoughts, and the woman left the room muttering something about *jelly*, and *my lady*. Helena went to the side of her mother's bed, determined to wait there till she awakened, then to give her the key, and tell her the circumstance. Notwithstanding the real simplicity of this little girl's character, she was, as her mother had discovered, *a nice observer*, and she had remarked that her mother never let any one but Marriott go into the boudoir. This remark did not excite her to dive into the mystery: on the contrary, she carefully repressed all curiosity, remembering the promise she had given to her mother when she talked of Zobeide and the porter. She had not been without temptation to break this promise; for the maid, who usually attended her toilette, had employed every art in her power to stimulate her curiosity. As she was dressing Helena this morning, she had said to her,

'The reason I was so late calling you, miss, this morning, was because I was so late myself last night—for I went to the play, miss, last night, which was Bluebeard—Lord bless us! I'm sure if I had been Bluebeard's wife, I should have opened the door if I'd died for it: for to have the notion of living all day long, and all night too, in a house in which there was a room that one was never to go into, is a thing I could not put up with.' Then after a pause, and after waiting in vain for some reply from Helena, she added,—Pray, Miss Delacour, did you ever go into that little room within my lady's bed-chamber, that Mrs. Marriott keeps the key of always?

No, said Helena.

I've often wondered what's in it—but then that's only because I'm a simpleton. I thought, to be sure, *you knew*.

Observing that Helena looked much displeased, she here broke off her speech, hoping that what she had said would operate in due time, and that she should thus excite the young lady to get the secret from Marriott, which she had no doubt afterward of *worming* from Miss Delacour.

In all this she calculated ill; for what she had said only made Helena distrust and dislike her. It was the recollection of this conversation, that made her follow the maid to her mother's bedchamber, to see what detained her there so long. Helena had heard Marriott say that she ought not to run up and down stairs, because her lady was asleep, and it appeared extraordinary, that but a few minutes after this information she should have gone into the room with a glass of jelly in her hand.

Ah, mamma! thought Helena, as she stood beside her mother's bed, you did not understand, and perhaps you did not believe me, when I said that I would not try to find out any thing that you wished me not to know. Now I hope you will *understand* me better.

Lady Delacour opened her eyes—Helena, cried she, starting up, how came you by that key?

O, mother! don't look as if you suspected me. She then told her mother how the key came into her hands.

My dear child, you have done me an essential service, said Lady Delacour. You know not its importance, at least in my estimation. But what gives me infinitely more satisfaction, you have proved yourself worthy of my esteem—my love.

Marriott came into the room, and whispered a few words to her lady.

You may speak out, Marriott, before my Helena, said Lady Delacour, rising from the bed as she spoke—Child as she is, Helena has deserved my

confidence; and she shall be convinced that, where her mother has once reason to confide, she is incapable of suspicion. Wait here for a few minutes, my dear.

She went to her boudoir, paid and dismissed the surgeon expeditiously—then returned—and taking her daughter by the hand, she said.

You look all simplicity, my dear! I see you have no vulgar school-girl curiosity. You will have all your mother's strength of mind; may you never have any of her faults, or any of her misfortunes!—I speak to you not as to a child, Helena, for you have reason far above your years; and you will remember what I now say to you as long as you live. You will possess talents, beauty, fortune; you will be admired, followed, and flattered, as I have been:—but do not throw away your life as I have thrown away mine, to win the praise of fools. Had I used but half the talents I possess, as I hope you will use yours, I might have been an ornament to my sex, I might have been a Lady Anne Percival.

Here Lady Delacour's voice failed—but, commanding her emotion, she in a few moments went on speaking.

Choose your friends well, my dear daughter! It was my misfortune, my folly, early in life to connect myself with a woman, who under the name of frolic led me into every species of mischief. You are too young, too innocent, to hear the particulars of my history now; but you will hear them all at a proper time from my best friend, Miss Portman. I shall leave you to her care, my dear, when I die.

When you die!—O, mother! said Helena, but why do you talk of dying? and she threw her arms round her mother.

Gently, my love! said Lady Delacour, shrink-

ing back; and she seized this moment to explain to her daughter why she shrunk in this manner from her caresses, and why she talked of dying.

Helena was excessively shocked.

I wished, my dear, resumed her mother calmly, I wished to have spared you the pain of knowing all this. I have given you but little pleasure in my life, it is unjust to give you so much pain. We shall go to Twickenham to-morrow, and I will leave you with your aunt Margaret, my dear, till all is over. If I die, Belinda will take you with her immediately to Oakly Park—you shall have as little sorrow as possible. If you had shown me less of your affectionate temper, you would have spared yourself the anguish that you now feel, and you would have spared me—

My dear kind mother, interrupted Helena, throwing herself on her knees at her mother's feet, do not send me away from you—I don't wish to go to my aunt Margaret—I don't wish to go to Oakly Park—I wish to stay with you. Do not send me away from you; for I shall suffer ten times more if I am not with you, though I know I can be of no use.

Overcome by her daughter's entreaties, Lady Delacour at last consented that she should remain with her, and that she should accompany her to Twickenham.

The remainder of this day was taken up in preparations for their departure. The *stupid maid* was immediately dismissed. No questions were asked, and no reasons for her dismissal assigned, except that Lady Delacour had no further occasion for her services. Marriott alone was to attend her lady to Twickenham. Lord Delacour, it was settled, should stay in town, lest the unusual circumstance of his

attending his lady should excite public curiosity. His lordship, who was naturally a good-natured man, and who had been touched by the kindness his wife had lately shown him, was in extreme agitation during the whole of this day, which he thought might possibly be the last of her existence. She, on the contrary, was calm and collected; her courage seemed to rise with the necessity for its exertion.

In the morning when the carriage came to the door, as she parted with Lord Delacour, she put into his hand a paper that contained some directions and requests, with which she said she hoped that he would comply, if they should prove to be her *last requests*. The paper contained only some legacies to her servants, a provision for Marriott, and a bequest to her excellent and beloved friend, Belinda Portman, of the cabinet in which she kept Clarence Hervey's letters.

Interlined in this place, Lady Delacour had written these words: "My daughter is nobly provided for; and lest any doubt or difficulty should arise from the omission, I think it necessary to mention; that the said cabinet contains the valuable jewels left to me by my late uncle, and that it is my intention that the said jewels should be part of my bequest to the said Belinda Portman.—If she marry a man of good fortune, she will wear them for my sake: if she do not marry an opulent husband, I hope she will sell the jewels without scruple, as they are intended for her convenience, and not as an ostentatious bequest. It is fit that she should be as independent in her circumstances as she is in her mind."

Lord Delacour with much emotion looked over this paper, and assured her ladyship that she should be obeyed, if—— he could say no more.

Farewell then, my lord ! said she : keep up your spirits, for I intend to live many years yet to try them.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SPECTRE.

THE surgeon who was to attend Lady Delacour was prevented from going to her on the day appointed ; he was one of the surgeons of the queen's household, and his attendance was required at the palace. This delay was extremely irksome to Lady Delacour, who had worked up her courage to the highest point, but who had not prepared herself to endure suspense. She spent nearly a week at Twickenham, in this anxious state, and Belinda observed that she every day became more and more thoughtful and reserved. She seemed as if she had some secret subject of meditation, from which she could not bear to be distracted. When Helena was present, she exerted herself to converse in her usual sprightly strain ; but as soon as she could escape, as she thought, unobserved, she would shut herself up in her own apartment, and remain there for hours.

I wish to heaven, Miss Portman ! said Marriott, coming one morning into her room with a portentous face—I wish to heaven, ma'am, that you could any way persuade my lady not to spend so many hours of the day and night as she does in reading those methodistical books that she keeps to herself !—I'm sure that they do her no good, but a great deal of harm, especially now, when her spirits should be kept up as much as possible. I am sen-

sible, ma'am, that 'tis those books that have made my lady melancholy of a sudden. Ma'am, my lady has let drop very odd hints within these two or three days, and she speaks in a strange *disconnected* sort of style, and at times I do not think she is quite right in her head.

When Belinda questioned Marriott more particularly about the strange hints which her lady had let fall, she with looks of embarrassment and horror declined repeating the words that had been said to her; yet persisted in asserting that Lady Delacour had been very *strange* for these two or three days. And I'm sure, ma'am, you'd be shocked if you were to see my lady in a morning when she wakens, or rather when I first go into the room—for as to wakening, that's out of the question: I am certain she does not sleep during the whole night. You'll find, ma'am, it is as I tell you, those books will quite turn her poor head, and I wish they were burnt.—I know the mischief that the same sort of things did to a poor cousin of my own, who was driven melancholy mad by a methodist preacher, and came to an untimely end. Oh, ma'am! if you knew as much as I do, you'd be as much alarmed for my lady as I am.

It was impossible to prevail upon Marriott to explain herself more distinctly. The only circumstances that could be drawn from her, seemed to Belinda so trifling as to be scarcely worth mentioning. For instance, that Lady Delacour, contrary to Marriott's advice, had insisted on sleeping in a bed-chamber upon the ground floor, and had refused to let a curtain be put up before a glass door that was at the foot of her bed. When I offered to put up the curtain, ma'am, said Marriott, my lady said she liked the moonlight, and that she *would not* have it put up till the fine nights were

over. Now, Miss Portman, to hear my lady talk of the moon, and moonlights, and liking the moon, is rather extraordinary and unaccountable; for I never heard her say any thing of the sort in my life before; I question whether she ever knew there was a moon or not from one year's end to another. But they say the moon has a great deal to do with mad people; and, from my own experience, I'm perfectly sensible, ma'am, it had in my own cousin's case; for, before he came to the worst, he took a prodigious fancy to the moon, and was always for walking by moonlight, and talking to one of the beauty of the moon, and such melancholy nonsense, ma'am.

Belinda could not forbear smiling at this melancholy nonsense; though she was inclined to be of Marriott's opinion about the methodistical books, and she determined to talk to Lady Delacour on the subject. The moment that she made the attempt, her ladyship, commanding her countenance, with her usual ability, replied only by cautious, cold monosyllables, and changed the conversation as soon as she could.

At night, when they were retiring to rest, Marriott, as she lighted them to their rooms, observed that she was afraid her lady would suffer from sleeping in so cold a bed-chamber, and Belinda pressed her friend to change her apartment.

No, my dear, replied Lady Delacour calmly. I have chosen this for my bed-chamber because it is at a distance from the servants' room; and when the operation, which I have to go through, shall be performed, my cries, if I should utter any, will not be overheard. The surgeon will be here in a few days; and it is not worth while to make any change.

The next day, towards evening, the surgeon and Doctor X—— arrived. Belinda's blood ran cold at the sight of them.

Will you be so kind, Miss Portman, said Marriott, as to let my lady know that they are come? for I am not well able to go, and you can speak more composed to her than I can.

Miss Portman went to Lady Delacour's bed-chamber. The door was bolted. As she opened it, she fixed her eyes upon Belinda, and said to her with a mild voice, You are come to tell me that the surgeon is arrived: I knew that by the manner in which you knocked at the door. I will see him this moment, continued she in a firm tone; and she deliberately put a mark in the book in which she had been reading, walked leisurely to the other end of the room, and locked it up in her book-case. There was an air of determined dignity in all her motions. Shall we go? I am ready, said she, holding out her hand to Belinda, who had sunk upon a chair. One would think that you were the person that was going to suffer. But drink this water, my dear, and do not tremble for me; you see that I do not tremble for myself. Listen to me, dearest Belinda! I owe it to your friendship not to torment you with unnecessary apprehensions. Your humanity shall be spared this dreadful scene.

No, said Belinda, Marriott is incapable of attending you. I must—I will—I am ready now. Forgive me one moment's weakness. I admire, and will imitate, your courage. I will keep my promise.

Your promise was, to be with me in my dying moments, and to let me breathe my last in your arms.

I hope that I shall never be called upon to perform that promise.

Lady Delacour made no answer, but walked on before her with steady steps into the room where Doctor X—— and the surgeon were waiting. Without adverting in the least to the object of their visit, she paid her compliments to them, as if they came on a visit of mere civility. Without seeming to notice the serious countenances of her companions, she talked of indifferent subjects with the most perfect ease, occupying herself all the time with cleaning a seal, which she unhooked from her watch-chain. This seal, said she, turning to Doctor X——, is a fine onyx—it is a head of Esculapius. I have a great value for it. It was given to me by your friend Clarence Hervey; and I have left it in my will, doctor, continued she smiling, to you, as no slight token of my regard. He is an excellent young man; and I request, said she, drawing Doctor X—— to a window, and lowering her voice, I request when you see him again, and when I am out of the way, that you will tell him such were my sentiments to the hour of my death. Here is a letter which you will have the goodness to put into his hands, sealed with my favourite seal. You need have no scruple to take charge of it: it relates not to myself. It expresses only my opinion concerning a lady, who stands almost as high in your esteem, I believe, as she does in mine. My affection and my gratitude have not biassed my judgement in the advice which I have ventured to give to Mr. Hervey.

But he will soon be here, interrupted Doctor X——, and then—

And then I shall be gone, said Lady Delacour coolly,

To the undiscover'd country,
From whose bourn no traveller returns.

Doctor X—— was going to interrupt her, but she continued rapidly ;

And now, my dear doctor ! tell me candidly, have you seen any symptoms of cowardice in my manner this evening ?

None, replied he. On the contrary, I have admired your calm self-possession.

Then do not suspect me of want of fortitude; when I request that this operation may not be performed to-day. I have changed my mind within these few hours. I have determined, for a reason which I am sure that you would feel to be sufficient, to postpone this affair till to-morrow. Believe me, I do not act from caprice.

She saw that Doctor X—— did not yield assent to her last assertion, and that he looked displeased.

I will tell you my reason, said she, and then you will have no right to be displeased if I persist, as I shall inflexibly, in my determination. It is my belief that I shall die this night. To submit to a painful operation to-day would be only to sacrifice the last moments of my existence to no purpose. If I survive this night, manage me as you please. But I am the best judge of my own feelings. I shall die to-night.

Dr. X—— looked at her with a mixture of astonishment and compassion. Her pulse was high, she was extremely feverish, and he thought that the best thing which he could do was to stay with her till the next day, and to endeavour to divert her mind from this fancy, which he considered as an insane idea. He prevailed upon the surgeon to stay with her till the next morning ; and he communicated his intentions to Belinda, who joined with him in doing all that was possible to entertain and interest Lady Delacour by conversation, during

the remainder of the day. She had sufficient penetration to perceive that they gave not the least faith to her prognostics, and she never said one word more upon the subject; but appeared willing to be amused by their attempts to divert her, and resolute to support her courage till the last moment. She did not affect trifling gaiety; on the contrary, there was in all she said more strength and less point than usual.

The evening passed away, and Lady Delacour seemed totally to have forgotten her own prophecy respecting the event of the ensuing night; so much so, that she spoke of several things that she intended to do the next day. Helena knew nothing of what had passed, and Belinda imagined that her friend put this constraint upon herself, to avoid alarming her daughter. Yet, after Helena retired, her mother's manner continued to be so much the same, that Doctor X— began to believe that her ladyship was actuated merely by caprice. In this opinion she confirmed him by bursting out a-laughing, when he proposed that some one should sit up with her during the night.

My sage sir, said she, have you lived to this time without ever having been duped by a woman before? I wanted a day's reprieve, and I have gained it—gained a day, spent in most agreeable conversation, for which I thank you. To-morrow, said she, turning to the surgeon, I must invent some new excuse for my cowardice; and though I give you notice of it beforehand, as Barrington did when he picked the man's pocket, yet, nevertheless, I shall succeed. Good night!

She hurried to her own apartment, leaving them all in astonishment and perplexity. Belinda was persuaded that she only affected this gaiety to prevent Doctor X— from insisting upon sitting up.

in her room, as he had proposed. Doctor X——, judging, as he said, from her ladyship's general character, attributed the whole to caprice; and the surgeon, judging, as he said, from human nature in general, was decided in his belief, that she had been influenced, as she herself declared, by cowardice. After having all expressed their opinions, without making any impression upon one another, they retired to rest.

Belinda's bed-chamber was next to Helena's; and after she had been in bed about an hour, she fancied that she heard some one walking softly in the next room. She rose, and found Lady Delacour standing beside her daughter's bed. She started at the sight of Belinda, but only said in a low voice, as she pointed to her child, "Don't waken her." She then looked at her for some moments in silence. The moon shone full upon her face. She stooped over Helena, parted the ringlets of hair upon her forehead, and kissed her gently.

You will be good to this poor girl when I am gone, Belinda! said she, turning away from her as she spoke: I only came to look at her for the last time.

Are you then serious, my dear Lady Delacour?

Hush! Don't waken her, said Lady Delacour putting her finger on her lips; and walking slowly out of the room, she forbade Belinda to follow.

If my fears be vain, said she, why should I disturb you with them? If they be just, you will hear my bell ring, and then come to me.

For some time afterward all was perfectly silent in the house. Belinda did not go to bed, but sat waiting and listening anxiously. The clock struck two; and as she heard no other sound, she began to hope that she had suffered herself to be falsely

alarmed by a foolish imagination, and she lay down upon her bed, resolving to compose herself to rest. She was just sinking to sleep, when she thought she heard the faint sound of a bell. She was not sure whether she was dreaming or awake. She started up and listened. All was silent. But in a few minutes Lady Delacour's bell rang violently. Belinda flew to her room. The surgeon was already there; he had been sitting up in the next room to write letters; and he had heard the first sound of the bell. Lady Delacour was senseless, supported in the surgeon's arms. Belinda, by his directions, ran immediately for Doctor X——, who was at the other end of the house. Before she returned, Lady Delacour had recovered her senses. She begged that the surgeon would leave the room, and that neither Doctor X—— nor Marriott might yet be admitted, as she had something of importance to communicate to Miss Portman. The surgeon withdrew, and she beckoned to Belinda, who sat down upon the side of her bed. Lady Delacour held out her hand to her; it was covered with a cold dew.

My dear friend, said she, my prophecy is accomplishing—I know I must die.

The surgeon said that you were not in the least danger, my dear Lady Delacour! that it was merely a fainting fit. Do not suffer a vain imagination thus to overpower your reason.

It is no vain imagination—I must die, said Lady Delacour:

I heard a voice you cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay:
I see a hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away.

You perceive that I am in my perfect senses, my

dear! or I could not quote poetry. I am not insane—I am not delirious.

She paused.—I am ashamed to tell you what I know will expose me to your ridicule.

Ridicule! cried Belinda; can you think me so cruel as to consider your sufferings as a subject for ridicule?

Lady Delacour was overcome by the tenderness with which Belinda spoke.

I will then speak to you, said she, without reserve. Inconsistent as it is, with the strength of mind which you might expect from me, I cannot resist the impression which has been made on my mind by—a vision.

A vision!

Three times, continued Lady Delacour, it has appeared to me about this hour. The first night after we came here I saw it; last night it returned; and to-night I have beheld it for the third time. I consider it as a warning to prepare for death.—You are surprised—you are incredulous. I know that this must appear to you extravagant; but, depend upon it, that what I tell you is true. It is scarcely a quarter of an hour since I beheld the figure of —, that man for whose untimely death I am answerable. Whenever I close my eyes, the same form appears before me.

These visions, said Belinda, are certainly the effects of opium.

The forms that flit before my eyes when I am between sleeping and waking, said Lady Delacour, I am willing to believe are the effects of opium; but, Belinda, it is impossible I should be convinced that my senses have deceived me with respect to what I have beheld, when I have been as broad awake, and in as perfect possession of my understanding, as I am at this instant. The habits of my

life, and the natural gaiety, not to say levity, of my temper, have always inclined me rather to incredulity than to superstition. But there are things which no strength of mind, no temerity, can resist. I repeat it, this is a warning to me to prepare for death. No human means, no human power, can save me!

Here they were interrupted by Marriott, who could no longer be restrained from bursting into the room. Dr. X—— followed; and going calmly to the side of Lady Delacour's bed, took her hand to feel her pulse.

Mrs. Marriott, you need not alarm yourself in this manner, said he; your lady is at this instant in as little danger as I am.

You think she'll live! O, my lady! why did you terrify us in this manner?

Lady Delacour smiled, and calmly said, as Dr. X—— still continued to count her pulse;

The pulse may deceive you, doctor, but I do not. Marriott, you may—

Belinda heard no more; for at this instant, as she was standing alone, near the glass door that was opposite to the bed, she saw at a distance in the garden the figure which Lady Delacour had described. Lady Delacour was now so intent upon speaking to Dr. X——, that she saw nothing but him. Belinda had the presence of mind to be perfectly silent. The figure stood still for some moments. She advanced a few steps nearer to the window, and the figure vanished. She kept her eye steadily fixed upon the spot where it had disappeared, and she saw it rise again, and glide quickly behind some bushes. Belinda beckoned to Dr. X——, who perceived, by the eagerness of her manner, that she wished to speak to him immediately. He resigned his patient to Marriott, and

followed Miss Portman out of the room. She told him what she had just seen, said that it was of the utmost consequence to Lady Delacour to have the truth ascertained, requested that Dr. X—— would go with some of the men servants, and search the garden, to discover whether any one was there concealed, or whether any footsteps could be traced. The doctor did not search long before he perceived footsteps in the borders opposite to the glass door of Lady Delacour's bed-chamber; he was carefully following their track, when he heard a loud cry, which seemed to come from the other side of the garden wall. There was a breach in the wall, over which he scrambled with some difficulty. The screams continued with redoubled violence. As he was making his way to the spot from which they proceeded, he was met by the old gardener, who was crossing one of the walks with a lantern in his hand.

Ho! ho! cried the gardener, I take it that we have the thief at last. I fancy that the fellow whose footsteps I traced, and who has been at my morello cherry-tree every night, has been caught in the trap. I hope his leg is not broke, though!—This way, sir!—this way!

The gardener led the doctor to the place, and there they found a man whose leg had been actually caught in the spring trap which had been set for the defence of the cherry-tree. The man had by this time fallen into a swoon; they extricated him as fast as possible, and Dr. X—— had him brought to Lady Delacour's, in order that the surgeon, who was there, might see his leg.

As they were carrying him across the hall, Belinda met them. She poured out a glass of water for the man, who was just recovering from his swoon; but, as she went nearer to give it to him,

she was struck with his wonderful resemblance to Harriet Freke.

It must be Mrs. Freke herself! whispered she to Marriott, whose wide-opening eyes, at this instant, fixed themselves upon her.

It must be Mrs. Freke herself, ma'am!—repeated Marriott.

And so in fact it was.

There is a certain class of people, who are incapable of generous confidence in their equals, but who are disposed to yield implicit credit to the underhand information of mean emissaries. Through the medium of Champfort and the *stupid maid*, Mrs. Freke had learned a confused story of a man's footsteps having been heard in Lady Delacour's boudoir, of his being let in by Marriott secretly, of his having remained locked up there for several hours, and of the maid's having been turned away, merely because she innocently went to open the door whilst the gentleman was in concealment. Mrs. Freke was further informed, by the same unquestionable authority, that Lady Delacour had taken a house at Twickenham, for the express purpose of meeting her lover; that Miss Portman and Marriott were the only persons who were to be of this party of pleasure.

Upon the faith of this intelligence, Mrs. Freke, who had accompanied Mrs. Luttridge to town, immediately repaired to Twickenham, to pay a visit to a third-cousin, that she might have an opportunity of detecting the intrigues, and afterward of publishing the disgrace, of her former friend. The desire of revenging herself upon Miss Portman, for having declined her civilities at Harrowgate, had also a powerful influence in stimulating her malicious activity. She knew, that if it were proved that Belinda was the confidante of Lady Delacour's in-

trigues, her reputation must be materially injured, and that the Percivals would then be as desirous to break off, as they now were anxious to promote, the match with Mr. Vincent. Charmed with this hope of a double triumph, the vindictive lady commenced her operations; nor was she ashamed to descend to the character of a spy. The general and convenient name of *frolic*, she thought, would cover every species of meanness. She swore that it was charming fun to equip herself at night in man's clothes, and to sally forth to reconnoitre the motions of the enemy.

By an unfrequented path she used to gain the window that looked into Lady Delacour's bed-chamber. This was the figure which appeared at night at a certain hour, and which, to her ladyship's disturbed imagination, seemed to be the form of Colonel Lawless. There was, indeed, a resemblance in their size and persons, which favoured the delusion. For several nights, Mrs. Freke paid these visits, without obtaining any satisfaction; but this night she thought herself overpaid for her exertions, by the charming discovery which she fancied she had made. She mistook the surgeon for a lover of Lady Delacour's; and she was hurrying home with the joyful intelligence, when she was caught in the gardener's trap. The agony that she suffered was at first intense: but in a few hours the pain somewhat subsided; and in this interval of rest she turned to Belinda, and with a malicious smile said,—Miss Portman, 'tis fair I should pay for my peeping; but I shall not pay quite so dear for it as some of my friends.

Miss Portman did not in the least comprehend her, till she added, I'm sure you'll allow that 'tis better for a lady to lose her leg, than her reputation—and for my part, I'd rather be caught in a

man-trap, than have a man caught in my bed-chamber. My service to your friend Lady Delacour, and tell her so.

And do you know who that gentleman was, that you saw in her ladyship's room?

Not I—not yet, but I'll make it my business to find out. I give you fair notice : I'm a very devil when provoked. Why didn't you make me your friend when you could?—You'll not baffle me. I have seen all I wanted, and I am capable of painting all I saw. As to who the man might be, that's no matter. One Lothario is as good as another for my purpose.

Longer had Mrs. Freke spoken with malignant triumph, had she not been interrupted by a burst of laughter from the surgeon. Her vexation was indescribable when he informed her, that he was the man whom she had seen in Lady Delacour's bed-chamber, and whom she had mistaken for a favoured lover.

Like the surgeon in *Gil Blas*, said Dr. X——, who was challenged for having had the honour of a surgical tête-à-tête with *Dame Sephora*.

Mrs. Freke's leg was much cut and bruised ; and now that she was no longer supported by the hopes of revenge, she began to lament loudly and incessantly the injury that she had sustained. She impatiently inquired how long it was probable that she should be confined by this accident ; and she grew quite outrageous when it was hinted that the beauty of her legs would be spoiled, and that she would never more be able to appear to advantage in man's apparel. The dread of being seen by Lady Delacour, in the deplorable yet ludicrous situation to which she had reduced herself, operated next upon her mind ; and every time the door of her apartment opened, she looked with terror towards it,

expecting to see her ladyship appear. But though Lady Delacour heard from Marriott immediately the news of Mrs. Freke's disaster, she never disturbed the lady by her presence. She was too generous to insult a fallen foe.

Early in the morning Mrs. Freke was, by her own desire, conveyed to her cousin's house, where, without regret, we shall leave her to suffer the consequences of her frolic.

A false prophetess!—Notwithstanding all my visions, I have outlived the night, you see, said Lady Delacour to Miss Portman, when they met in the morning. I have heard, my dear Belinda, and I believe, that the passion of love, which can endure caprice, vice, wrinkles, deformity, poverty, nay, disease itself, is notwithstanding so squeamish as to be instantaneously disgusted by the perception of folly in the object beloved. I hope friendship, though akin to love, is of a more robust constitution, else what would become of me? My folly, and my visions, and my spectre—O that I had not exposed myself to you in this manner!—Harriet Freke herself is scarcely more contemptible. Spies and cowards are upon an equal footing. Her malice and her *frolic* are consistent with her character, but my fears and my superstitions are totally inconsistent with mine. Forget the nonsense I talked to you last night, my dear, or fancy that I was then under the dominion of laudanum. This morning you shall see Lady Delacour *herself again*. Is Dr. X—, is the surgeon ready? Where are they? I am prepared. My fortitude shall redeem me in your opinion, Belinda, and in my own.

Dr. X— and the surgeon immediately obeyed her summons.

Helena heard them go into Lady Delacour's room, and she saw by Marriott's countenance, who

followed, that her mother was going to submit to the operation. She sat down trembling on the steps which led to her mother's room, and waited there a long time, as she thought, in the most painful suspense. At last she heard some one call Helena. She looked up, and saw her father close to her.

Helena, said he, how is your mother?

I don't know,—O papa, you cannot go in there now, said Helena, stopping him as he was pressing forwards.

Why did not you or Miss Portman write to me yesterday, as you promised? said Lord Delacour, in a voice that showed he was scarcely able to ask the question.

Because, papa, we had nothing to tell you. Nothing was done yesterday. But the surgeon is now there, said Helena, pointing towards her mother's room.

Lord Delacour stood motionless for an instant; then suddenly seizing his daughter's hand, Let us go, said he: if we stay here we shall hear her screams; and he was hurrying her away, when the door of Lady Delacour's apartment opened, and Belinda appeared, her countenance radiant with joy.

Good news, dear Helena!—O, my lord! you are come in a happy moment—I give you joy.

Joy! joy! joy! cried Marriott, following.

Is it all over? said Lord Delacour.

And without a single shriek! said Helena. What courage!

There's no need of shrieks, or courage either, thank God! said Marriott. Dr. X—— says so, and the surgeon is not wanted. Dr. X—— says so, and he is the best man in the world, and the cleverest.

And I was right from the first ; I said it was impossible my lady should have such a shocking complaint as she thought she had. There's no such thing at all in the case, my lord ! I said so always, till I was persuaded out of my senses by that villainous quack, who contradicted me for his own 'molument. And Dr. X—— says, if my lady will leave off the terrible quantities of laudanum she takes, he'll engage for her recovery.

Here Dr. X—— explained that Lady Delacour's sufferings had principally arisen from the nostrums given to her by the wretch to whom she had trusted implicitly, that she never in reality had a cancer.

Now I'm morally certain Mr. Champfort would die with vexation, continued Marriott, if he could see the joy that's painted in my lord's face this minute. And we may thank Miss Portman for this, for 'twas she made every thing go right, and I never expected to live to see so happy a day.

Whilst Marriott ran on in this manner, with all the volubility of joy, Lord Delacour passed her with some difficulty, and Helena was in her mother's arms in an instant.

Lady Delacour, struck to the heart by their affectionate looks and words, burst into tears. How little have I deserved this kindness from you, my lord ! or from you, my child ! But my feelings, added she, wiping away her tears, shall not waste themselves in tears, nor in vain thanks. My actions, the whole course of my future life, shall show that I am not quite a brute. Even brutes are won by kindness. Observe, my lord, continued she, smiling, I said *won*, not *tamed* !—A tame Lady Delacour would be a sorry animal, not worth looking at. Were she even to become domesticated, she would fare the worse.

How so?—How so, my dear? said Lord Delacour and Belinda, almost in the same breath.

How so?—Why, if Lady Delacour were to wash off her rouge, and lay aside her airs, and be as gentle, good, and kind as Belinda Portman, for instance, her lord would certainly say to her,

So alter'd are your face and mind,
'Twere perjury to love you now.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHAPLAIN.

IN some minds, emotions of joy are always connected with feelings of benevolence and generosity. Lady Delacour's heart expanded with the sensations of friendship and gratitude, now that she was relieved from those fears by which she had long been oppressed.

My dear daughter, said she to Helena, have you at this instant any wish that I can gratify?—Ask any thing you please, the fairy Goodwill shall contrive to get it for you in a trice. You have thought of a wish at this moment, I know by your eyes, by your blush. Nay, do not hesitate. Do you doubt me because I do not appear before you in the shape of a little ugly old woman, like Cinderella's godmother? or do you despise me because you do not see a wand waving in my hand? —' Ah, little skilled of fairy lore!' know that I am in possession of a talisman that can command more than ever fairy granted: Behold my talisman, continued she, drawing out her purse, and showing the gold through the net-work. Speak boldly, then, cried she to Helena, and be obeyed.

Ah, mamma, said Helena, I was not thinking of what fairies or gold can give; but *you* can grant my wish, and if you will let me I will whisper it to you.

Lady Delacour stooped to hear her daughter's whisper.

Your wish is granted, my own grateful charming girl! said her mother.

Helena's wish was, that her mother could be reconciled to her good aunt, Margaret Delacour. Her ladyship sat down instantly, and wrote to Mrs. Delacour. Helena was the bearer of this letter, and Lady Delacour promised to wait upon this excellent old lady as soon as she should return to town.

In the mean time her ladyship's health rapidly improved under the skilful care of Dr. X——: it had been terribly injured by the ignorance and villany of the wretch to whom she had so long and so rashly trusted. The nostrums which he persuaded her to take, and the immoderate use of opium to which she accustomed herself, would have ruined her constitution, had it not been uncommonly strong. Dr. X—— recommended it to her ladyship to abstain gradually from opium, and this advice she had the resolution to follow with uninterrupted perseverance.

The change in Lady Delacour's manner of life, in the hours and the company that she kept, contributed much to her recovery. We spare the reader the medical journal of Lady Delacour's health for some months; her recovery was gradual and complete. She was no longer in continual anxiety to conceal the state of her health from the world. She had no secret to keep—no part to act; her reconciliation with her husband and with his *friends* restored her mind to ease and self-compla-

cency. Her little Helena was a source of daily pleasure; and no longer conscious of neglecting her daughter, she no longer feared that the affections of her child should be alienated. Dr. X—, well aware that the passions have a powerful influence over the body, thought it full as necessary in some cases to attend to the mind as to the pulse. By conversing with Lady Delacour, and by combining hints and circumstances, he soon discovered what had lately been the course of her reading, and what impression it had made on her imagination. Mrs. Marriott, indeed, assisted him with her opinion concerning *the methodistical books*; and when he recollected the forebodings of death which her ladyship had felt, and the terror with which she had been seized on the night of Mrs. Freke's adventure, he was convinced that superstitious horrors hung upon his patient's spirits, and affected her health. To argue on religious subjects was not his province, much less his inclination; but he was acquainted with a person qualified by his profession and his character 'to minister to a mind diseased,' and he resolved on the first favourable opportunity to introduce this gentleman to her ladyship.

One morning Lady Delacour was complaining to Belinda that the books in the library were in dreadful confusion. My lord has really a very fine library, said she, but I wish he had half as many books twice as well arranged; I never can find any thing I want. Dr. X—, I wish to heaven you could recommend a librarian to my lord—not a chaplain, observe.

Why not a chaplain? may I ask your ladyship? said the doctor.

O, because we had once a chaplain, who gave me

a surfeit of the whole tribe. The meanest sycophant, yet the most impertinent busybody—always cringeing, yet always intriguing—wanting to govern the whole family, and at the same time every creature's humble servant—fawning to my lord the bishop, insolent to the poor curate—anathematizing all who differed from him in opinion, yet without dignity to enforce the respect due to his faith or his profession—greedy for preferment, yet without a thought of the duties of his office. It was the common practice of this man to leap from his horse at the church door after following a pack of hounds, huddle on his surplice, and gabble over the service with the most indecent mockery of religion.—Do I speak with acrimony? I have reason. It was this chaplain who first led my lord to Newmarket; it was he who first taught my lord to drink. Then he was a *wit*—an insufferable wit! His conversation after he had drunk was such as no woman but Harriet Freke could understand, and such as few *gentlemen* could hear. I have never, alas! been thought a prude, but in the heyday of my youth and gaiety this man always disgusted me. In one word, he was a buck parson. I hope you have as great a horror for this species of animal as I have?

Full as great, replied Doctor X——; but I consider them as monsters, which, belonging to no species, can disgrace none.

They ought to be hunted by common consent out of civilized society, said Lady Delacour.

They are by public opinion banished from all rational society; and your ladyship's just indignation proves that they have no chance of being tolerated by fashion. But would it not allow such beings too much consequence, would it not extend

their power to do mischief, if we perceived that one such parson could disgust Lady Delacour with the whole race of chaplains?

It is uncommon, replied her ladyship, to hear a physician *earnest* in the defence of the clergy—and a literary philosophic physician too! Shall we have an eulogium upon bishops as well as chaplains?

We have had that already, replied Doctor X——. All ranks, persuasions, and descriptions of people, including, I hope, those stigmatized by the name of philosophers, have joined in admiration of the Bishop St. Pol de Leon. The conduct of the real martyrs to their faith amongst the French clergy not even the most witty or brutal sceptic could ridicule.

You surprise me, doctor! said Lady Delacour; for I assure you that you have the character of being very liberal in your opinions.

I hope I am liberal in my opinions, replied the doctor, and that I give your ladyship a proof of it.

You would not then persecute a man or woman with ridicule for believing more than you do? said Lady Delacour.

Those who persecute to overturn religion, can scarcely pretend to more philosophy, or more liberality, than those who persecute to support it, said Doctor X——.

Perhaps, doctor, you are only speaking popularly?

I believe what I now say to be true, said Doctor X——, and I always endeavoured to make truth popular.

But possibly these are only truths for ladies. Doctor X—— may be such an ungallant philosopher, as to think that some truths are not fit for

ladies. He may hold a different language with gentlemen.

I should not only be an ungallant but a weak philosopher, said Doctor X——, if I thought that truth was not the same for all the world who can understand it. And who can doubt Lady Delacour's being of that number?

Lady Delacour, who at the beginning of this conversation had spoken guardedly, from the fear of lowering the doctor's opinion of her understanding, was put at her ease by the manner in which he now spoke; and, half laying aside the tone of raillery, she said to him—

Well, doctor! seriously, I am not so *illiberal* as to condemn *all* chaplains for one, odious as he was. But where to find his contrast in these degenerate days? Can you, who are a defender of the faith, and so forth, assist me? Will you recommend a chaplain to my lord?

Willingly, said Doctor X——; and that is what I would not say for a world of fees, unless I were sure of my man.

What sort of a man is he?

Not a buck parson.

And I hope not a pedant, not a dogmatist, for that would be almost as bad. Before we domesticate another chaplain, I wish to know all his qualities, and to have a full and true description of him.

Shall I then give you a full and true description of him in the words of Chaucer?

In any words you please. But Chaucer's chaplain must be a little oldfashioned by this time, I should think.

Pardon me. Some people, as well as some things, never grow oldfashioned. I should not be

ashamed to produce Chaucer's parish priest at this day to the best company in England. I am not ashamed to produce him to your ladyship; and, if I can remember twenty lines in his favour, I hope you will give me credit for being a sincere friend to the worthy part of the clergy. Observe, you must take them as I can patch them together; I will not promise that I can recollect twenty lines *de suite*, and without missing a word; that is what I would not swear to do for his grace the archbishop of Canterbury.

His grace would probably excuse you from swearing, at least I will, said Lady Delacour, on the present occasion. So now for your twenty lines, in whatever order you please.

Doctor X—— with sundry intervals of recollection, which may be spared the reader, repeated the following lines :

Yet has his aspect nothing of severe,
 But such a face as promis'd him sincere.
 Nothing reserv'd or sullen was to see,
 But sweet regards, and pleasing sanctity,
 Mild was his accent, and his action free. }
 With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd,
 Though harsh the precept, yet the preacher charm'd;
 For, letting down the golden chain from high,
 He drew his audience upwards to the sky.
 He taught the gospel rather than the law,
 And forc'd himself to drive, but lov'd to draw.
 The tithes his parish freely paid, he took;
 But never sued, or curs'd with bell and book.
 Wide was his parish, not contracted close
 In streets—but here and there a straggling house,
 Yet still he was at hand, without request,
 To serve the sick, and succour the distress'd.
 The proud he tam'd, the penitent he cheer'd,
 Nor to rebuke the rich offender fear'd.
 His preaching much, but more his practice wrought,
 A living sermon of the truths he taught.

Lady Delacour wished that she could find a chaplain who in any degree resembled this charming parish priest, and Doctor X—— promised that he would the next day introduce to her his friend Mr. Moreton.

Mr. Moreton! said Belinda, the gentleman of whom Mr. Percival spoke, Mrs. Freke's Mr. Moreton?

Yes, said Doctor X——, the clergyman whom Mrs. Freke hanged in effigy, and to whom Clarence Hervey has given a small living.

These circumstances, even if he had not precisely resembled Chaucer's character of a benevolent clergyman, would have strongly interested Lady Delacour in his favour. She found him, upon further acquaintance, a perfect contrast to her former chaplain; and he gradually acquired such salutary influence over her mind, that he relieved her from the terrors of methodism, and in their place substituted the consolations of mild and rational piety.

Her conscience was now at peace; her spirits were real and equable, and never was her conversation so agreeable. Animated with the new feelings of returning health, and the new hopes of domestic happiness, she seemed desirous to impart her felicity to all around her, but chiefly to Belinda, who had the strongest claims upon her gratitude, and the warmest place in her affections. Belinda never made her friend feel the weight of any obligation, and consequently Lady Delacour's gratitude was a voluntary pleasure—not an expected duty. Nothing could be more delightful to Miss Portman than thus to feel herself the object at once of esteem, affection, and respect; to see that she had not only been the means of saving her friend's life, but that the influence she had obtained over her mind was

likely to be so permanently beneficial to her family.

Belinda did not take all the merit of this reformation to herself: she was most willing to share it in her own imagination not only with Doctor X—and Mr. Moreton, but with *poor Clarence Hervey*. She was pleased to observe that Lady Delacour never omitted any occasion of doing justice to his merit, and she loved her for that generosity, which sometimes passed the bounds of justice in her eulogiums. But Belinda was careful to preserve her consistency, and to guard her heart from the dangerous effect of these enthusiastic praises; and as Lady Delacour was now sufficiently re-established in her health, she announced her intention of returning immediately to Oakly Park, according to her promise to Lady Anne Percival and to Mr. Vincent.

But, my dear, said Lady Delacour, one week more is all I ask from you—may not friendship ask such a sacrifice from love?

You expect, I know, said Miss Portman ingeniously, that before the end of that time Mr. Hervey will be here.

True. And have you no friendship for him? said Lady Delacour with an arch smile, or is friendship for every man in the creation, one Augustus Vincent always excepted, prohibited by the statutes of Oakly Park?

By the statutes of Oakly Park nothing is forbidden, said Belinda, but what reason—

Reason! O, I have done if you go to reason. You are invulnerable to the light shafts of wit, I know, when you are cased in this heavy armour of reason; Cupid himself may strain his bow and exhaust his quiver upon you in vain. But have a care—you cannot live in armour all your life—lay it aside but for a moment, and the little bold urchin

will make it his prize. Remember Raphael's picture of Cupid creeping into the armour of the conqueror of the world.

I am sufficiently aware, said Belinda smiling, of the power of Cupid and of his wiles: I would not brave his malice, but I would fly from it.

It is so cowardly to fly!

Surely, prudence, not courage, is the virtue of our sex; and seriously, my dear Lady Delacour, I intreat you not to use your influence over my mind, lest you should lessen my happiness, though you cannot alter my determination.

Moved by the earnest manner in which Belinda uttered these words, Lady Delacour rallied her no more, nor did she longer oppose her resolution of returning immediately to Oakly Park.

May I remind you, said Miss Portman,—though it is seldom either politic or polite to remind people of their promises,—but may I remind you of something like a promise you made to accompany me to Mr. Percival's?

And would you have me behave so brutally to poor Lord Delacour, as to run away from him in this manner the moment I have strength to run?

Lord Delacour is included in this invitation, said Miss Portman, putting the last letter that she had received from Lady Anne Percival into her hands.

When I recollect, said Lady Delacour as she looked over the letter, how well this Lady Anne of yours has behaved to me about Helena—when I recollect, that, though you have been with her so long, she has not supplanted me in your affections, nor attempted to detain you when I sent Marriott to Oakly Park—and when I consider how much for my own advantage it will be to accept this invitation, I really cannot bring myself from pride, or folly, or any other motive, to refuse it. So, my

c- dear Belinda, prevail upon Lord Delacour to spend
1- his Christmas at Oakly Park instead of at Studley
of Manor (Rantipole, thank heaven! is out of the
st question), and prevail upon yourself to stay a few
days for me, and you shall take us all with you in
triumph.

of Belinda was convinced that, when Lady Delacour
I had once tasted the pleasures of domestic life, she
1, would not easily return to that dissipation which
ou she had followed from habit, and into which she
la had first been driven by a mixture of vanity and
to despair. All the connexions which she had im-
of prudently formed with numbers of fashionable, but
gh extravagant and thoughtless women, would insen-
le sibly be broken off by this measure; for Lady
e- Delacour, who was already weary of their com-
to pany, would be so much struck with the difference
to between their insipid conversation and the ani-
in mated and interesting society in Lady Anne Per-
id cival's family, that she would afterward think them
ad not only burdensome, but intolerable. Lord Dela-
s- cour's intimacy with Lord Studley was one of his
be chief inducements to that intemperance, which in-
of jured almost equally his constitution and his un-
I derstanding: for some weeks past he had abstained
so from all excess; but Belinda was well aware that,
as when the immediate motive of humanity to Lady
to Delacour ceased to act upon him, he would prob-
or ably return to his former habits, if he continued to
a- visit his former associates. It was therefore of im-
or portance to break at once his connexion with
ny Lord Studley, and to place him in a situation where
he might form new habits, and where his dormant
talents might be roused to exertion. She was con-
vinced that his understanding was not so much
below par, as she had once been taught to think it:
she perceived also, that, since their reconciliation,

Lady Delacour was anxious to make him appear to advantage: whenever he said any thing that was worth hearing, she looked at Belinda with triumph; and whenever he happened to make a *mistake* in conversation, she either showed involuntary signs of uneasiness, or passed it off with that easy wit by which she generally knew how to make the worse appear the better reason. Miss Portman knew that Mr. Percival possessed the happy talent of drawing out all the abilities of those with whom he conversed, and that he did not value men merely for their erudition, science, or literature; he was capable of estimating *the potential*, as well as *the actual range* of the mind. Of his generosity she could not doubt, and she was persuaded that he would take every possible means, which good nature, joined to good sense, could suggest, to raise Lord Delacour in his lady's esteem, and to make that union happy, which was indissoluble. All these reflections passed with the utmost rapidity in Belinda's mind, and the result of them was, that she consented to wait Lady Delacour's leisure for her journey.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PEU A PEU.

THINGS were in this situation, when, one day, Marriott made her appearance at her lady's toilette, with a face which at once proclaimed that something had discomposed her; and that she was impatient to be asked what it was.

What is the matter, Marriott? said Lady Delacour; for I know you want me to ask.

Want you to ask? O dear, my lady, no!—for I'm sure, it's a thing that goes quite against me to tell: for I thought, indeed my lady, *superiorly* of the person in question; so much so, indeed, that I wished, what I declare I should now be ashamed to mention, especially in the presence of Miss Portman, who deserves the best that this world can afford of every denomination. Well, ma'am, in one word, continued she, addressing herself to Belinda, I am extremely rejoiced that things are as they are; though, I confess, that was not always my wish or opinion, for which I beg Mr. Vincent's pardon and yours; but I hope to be forgiven, since I'm now come entirely round to my Lady Anne Percival's way of thinking, which I learnt, from good authority, at Oakly Park; and I am now convinced, and confident, Miss Portman, that every thing is for the best.

Marriott will inform us, in due course of time, what has thus suddenly and happily converted her, said Lady Delacour to Belinda, who was thrown into some surprise and confusion by Marriott's address; but Marriott went on with much warmth—

Dear me! I'm sure I thought we had got rid of all double-dealers, when the house was cleared of Mr. Champfort; but, O mercy! there's not traps enough in the world for them all; I only wish they were all caught, as finely as some people were, in a trap t'other night—'tis what all double-dealers, and Champfort at the head of the whole regiment, deserves; that's certain,

We must take patience, my dear Belinda, said Lady Delacour calmly, till Marriott has exhausted all the expletives in and out of the English language; and presently, when she has fought all her battles with Champfort over again, we may hope to get at the fact.

Dear ! my lady, it has nothing to do with Mr. Champfort, nor any such style of personage, I can assure you ; for, I'm positive, I'd rather think contemptibly of a hundred million Mr. Champforts, than of one such gentleman as Mr. Clarence Hervey.

Clarence Hervey ! exclaimed Lady Delacour. Taking it for granted that Belinda blushed, though in fact she did not, her ladyship, with superfluous address, instantly turned, so as to hide her friend's face from Mrs. Marriott. Well, Marriott, what of Mr. Hervey ?

O, my lady ! something you'll be surprised to hear, and Miss Portman too. It is not, by any means, that I am more of a prude than is becoming, my lady ; nor, that I take upon me to be so innocent, as not to know that young gentlemen of fortune will, if it be only for fashion's sake, have such things as kept-mistresses (begging pardon for mentioning such trash). But no one that has lived in the world, thinks any thing of that ; except, added she, catching a glimpse at Belinda's countenance, —except, to be sure, ma'am, morally speaking, it's very wicked and shocking, and makes one blush before company, till one's used to it, and ought certainly to be put down by act of parliament, ma'am ; but, my lady, you know, in point of surprising any body, or being discreditable in a young gentleman of Mr. Hervey's fortune and pretensions, it would be mere envy and scandal to deem it any thing—worth mentioning.

Then, for mercy's sake, or mine, said Lady Delacour, go on to something that *is* worth mentioning.

Well, my lady, you must know, then, that yesterday I wanted some hempseed for my bullfinch—Miss Helena's bullfinch, I mean ; for it was she *found it by accident*, you know, Miss Portman, the

day after we came here; poor thing, it got itself so entangled in the net over the morello cherry-tree, in the garden, that it could neither get itself in nor out; but very luckily, Miss Helena saw it, and saved, and brought it in: it was almost dead, my lady.

Was it—I mean, I am very sorry for it—that is what you expect me to say.—Now, go on—get us once past the bullfinch, or tell us what it has to do with Clarence Hervey.

That is what I am aiming at, as fast as possible, my lady.—So, I went for some hempseed for the bullfinch, and along with the hempseed they brought me, wrapped round it, as it were, a printed handbill, as it might be, or advertisement, which I threw off, disregardingly, taking it for granted it might have been some of those advertisements for lozenges, or razor-straps, that meet one wherever one goes; but Miss Delacour picked it up, and found it was a kind of hue and cry after a stolen or strayed bullfinch. Ma'am, I was so provoked, I could have cried, when I learnt it was the exact description of our little Bobby to a feather—gray upon the back, and red on—

O! spare me the description to a feather.—Well, you took the bird, bullfinch, or Bobby, as you call it, home to its rightful owner, I presume.—Let me get you so far on your way.

No, I beg your pardon, my lady, that is not the thing.

Then you did not take the bird home to its owner—and you are a bird-stealer?—With all my heart—be a dog-stealer, if you will—only go on.

But, my lady, you hurry me so, it puts every thing topsyturvy in my head; I could tell it as fast as possible my own way.

Do so, then.

I was ready to cry, when I found our little Bobby was claimed from us, to be sure; but Miss Delacour observed, that those, with whom it had lived till it was gray, must be sorrier still to part with it, so I resolved to do the honest and genteel thing by the lady who advertised for it, and to take it back myself, and to refuse the five guineas reward offered. The lady's name, according to the advertisement, was Ormond.

Ormond! repeated Lady Delacour, looking eagerly at Belinda; was not that the name Sir Philip Baddely mentioned to us—you remember?—

Yes; Ormond was the name, as well as I recollect, said Belinda with a degree of steady composure that provoked her ladyship.—Go on, Marriott.

And the words were, to leave the bird at a perfumer's in Twickenham, opposite to ———; but that's no matter.—Well, my lady, to the perfumer's I went with the bird this morning. Now, I had my reasons for wishing to see this Mrs. Ormond myself, because, my lady, there was one thing rather remarkable about this bullfinch, that it sings a very particular tune, which I never heard any bullfinch, or any human creature, sing any thing like before; so I determined, in my own cogitations, to ask this Mrs. Ormond to name the tunes her bullfinch could sing, before I produced it; and if she made no mention of its knowing any one out of the common way, I resolved to keep my bird to myself; as I might very conscientiously and genteelly too. So, my lady, when I got to the perfumer's, I inquired where Mrs. Ormond was to be found? I was told that she received no visits from any, at least from the female sex; and that I must leave the bird there till called for. I was consider-

ing what to do, and the strangeness of the information made about the female sex, when in there came, into the shop, a gentleman, who saved me all the indelicacy of asking particulars. The bullfinch was at this time piping away at a fine rate, and, as luck would have it, that very remarkable strange tune that I mentioned to you.—Says the gentleman, as he came into the shop, fixing his eyes on the bullfinch as if they would have come fairly out of his head—How did that bird come here?—I brought it here, sir, said I. Then he began to offer me mountains of gold, in a very strange way, if I could tell him any tidings of the lady to whom it belonged. The shopman, from behind the counter, now bent forward, and whispered the gentleman that he could give him some information, if he would make it worth his while; and they both went together to a little parlour behind the shop, and I saw no more of them. But, my lady, very opportunely for me, that was dying with curiosity, out of the parlour they turned a young woman in, to attend the shop, who proved to be an acquaintance of mine, whom I had done some little favours to when in service in London.—And this young woman, when I told her my distress about the advertisement and the bullfinch, let me into the whole of the affair.—Ma'am, said she, all that is known about Mrs. Ormond in this house, or any where else, is from me; so there was no occasion for turning me out of the parlour. I lived with Mrs. Ormond, ma'am, says she, for half a year, in the very house she now occupies, and consequently nobody can be better informed than I am:—to which I agreed. Then she told me, that the reason that Mrs. Ormond never saw any company of any sort was, because she is not fit to see company—proper company—for she's not a proper woman. She

has a most beautiful young creature there, shut up, who has been seduced, and is now deserted in a most cruel manner, by a Mr. Hervey. O, my lady! how the name struck upon my ear! I hoped, however, it was not our Mr. Hervey; but it was the identical Mr. Clarence Hervey. I made the young woman describe him, for she had often and often seen him, when he visited the unfortunate creature; and the description could suit none but our Mr. Hervey; and besides, it put it beyond a doubt, she told me his linen was all marked C. H.—So our Mr. Hervey, ma'am, added Marriott, turning to Belinda, it certainly proved to be, to my utter dismay and confusion.

O, Marriott! my poor head! exclaimed Lady Delacour, starting from under her hands—that cruel comb went at least half an inch into my head: heads have feeling as well as hearts, believe me. And, as she spoke, she snatched out the comb, with which Marriott had just fastened up her hair, and flung it on a sofa, at some yards' distance. Whilst Marriott went to fetch it, Lady Delacour thought that Belinda would have time to recover from that utter dismay and confusion into which she hoped that she must now be thrown.—Come, Marriott, make haste, I have done *you* at least a great favour, for you have all this hair to perform upon again, and you will have leisure to finish this story of yours—which, at all events, if it is not in any other respects wonderful, we must allow, is wonderfully long.

Well, my lady, to be short, then.—I was more curious than ever, when I heard all this, to hear more; and asked my friend how she could ever think of staying in a house with ladies of such a description? Upon which she justified herself, by *assuring me*, upon her honour, that at first she be-

lieved the young lady was married privately to Mr. Hervey, for that a clergyman came in secret, and read prayers, and she verily believes that the unfortunate young creature was deceived barbarously, and made to fancy herself married to all intents and purposes, till at once Mr. Hervey threw off the mask, and left off visiting her, pretending a necessity to take a journey, and handing her over to that vile woman, that Mrs. Ormond, who bid her be comforted, and all the things that are said by such women, on such occasions, by all accounts. But the poor deluded young thing saw how it was now too plain, and she was ready to break her heart; but not in a violent common sort of way, ma'am, but in silent grief, pining and drooping. My friend could not stand the sight, nor endure to look upon Mrs. Ormond, now she knew what she was; and so she left the house, without giving any reason, immediately. I forgot to mention, that the unfortunate girl's maiden name was St. Pierre, my lady; but her christian name, which was rather an out-o'-the-way name, I quite forget.

No matter, said Lady Delacour, we can live without it; or we can imagine it.

To be sure, I beg pardon, such sort of people's names can't be of any consequence, and, I'm sure, I blame myself now for going to the house, after all I had heard.

You did go to the house, then?

To my shame be it spoken; my curiosity got the better of me, and I went—but only on account of the bullfinch, in the eyes of the world. It was a great while before I could get in; but I was so firm that I would not give up the bird to no one but the lady herself, that I got in at last. O! never did my eyes light upon so beautiful a creature,

nor so graceful, nor so innocent to look at!—Belinda sighed—Marriott echoed the sigh, and continued:—She was by herself, and in tears, when I was shown in, ma'am, and she started as if she had never seen any body before in her life. But when she saw the bullfinch, ma'am, she clapped her hands, and, smiling through her tears like a child, she ran up to me, and thanked me again and again, kissing the bird between times, and putting it into her bosom. Well, I declare, if she had talked to all eternity, she could never have made me pity her half so much as all this did, for it looked so much like innocence. I'm sure nobody that was not—or, at least, that did not think themselves innocent, could have such ways, and such an innocent affection for a little bird. Not but what I know ladies of a certain description often have birds; but then, their fondness is all affectation and fashion; but this poor thing was all nature. Ah! poor unfortunate girl, thought I—but it's no matter what I thought now, said Marriott, shutting her eyes, to hide the tears that came into them at this instant; I was ashamed of myself when I saw Mrs. Ormond just then come into the room, which made me recollect what sort of company I was in. La! my lady, how I detested the sight of her! She looked at me, too, more like a dragon than any thing else; though in a civil way, and as if she was frightened out of her wits, she asked Miss St. Pierre, as she called her, how I had got in, (in a whisper) and she made all sort of signs afterward to her, to go out of the room. Never having been in such a situation before, I was quite robbed of all fluency, and could not,—what with the anger I felt for the one, and sorrow for the other,—get out a word of common sense, or even recollect what *pretence* brought me into the room, till the bird

very luckily put it into my head, by beginning to sing; so then I asked whether they could certify it to be theirs by any particular tune of its own? O! yes, said Miss St. Pierre; and she sung the very same tune. I never heard so sweet a voice; but, poor thing, something came across her mind in the middle of it, and she stopped; but she thanked me again for bringing back the bird, which, she said, had been hers for a great many years, and that she loved it dearly. I stood, I believe, like one stupified, till I was roused by *the woman's* offering to put the five guineas reward, mentioned in the advertisement, into my hand. The touch of her gold made me start, as if it had been a snake, and I pushed it from me; and when she pressed it again, I threw it on the table, scarce knowing what I did; and just then, in her iniquitous hand, I saw a letter, directed to Clarence Hervey, Esq. O! how I hated the sight of his name, and every thing belonging to him, ma'am, at that minute. I'm sure I could not have kept myself from saying something quite outrageous, if I had not taken myself out of the house, as I did, that instant.

When there are women enough born and bred good for nothing—and ladies enough to flirt with, that would desire no better—that a gentleman like Mr. Clarence Hervey, ma'am, should set his wits, as one may say, to be the ruin of such a sweet, innocent-looking young creature; and then desert her in that barbarous way, after bringing a clergyman to deceive her with the mock ceremony, and all—O! there's no fashion, nor nothing can countenance such wickedness! 'tis the worst of wickedness and cruelty—and I shall think and say so to the latest hour of my life.

Well said, Marriott, cried Lady Delacour.

I always thought that Marriott had a great deal of true spirit and feeling, said Belinda.

And now you know the reason, ma'am, added Marriott, that I said, I was glad *things are as they are*. To be sure, I and every body once thought—but that's all over now—and I am glad *things are as they are*.

Lady Delacour once more turned her quick eyes upon Belinda, and was much pleased to see that she seemed to sympathize with Marriott's indignation.

In the evening, when they were alone, Lady Delacour touched upon the subject again, and observed, that as they should now, in all probability, see Mr. Hervey in a few days, they might be able to form a better judgement of this affair, which, she doubted not, had been exaggerated. You should judge from the whole of Clarence's conduct and character, and not from any particular part, said her ladyship. Do not his letters breathe a spirit of generosity?

But, interrupted Miss Portman, I am not called upon to judge of Mr. Hervey's whole conduct and character, nor of any part of it; his letters and his generosity are nothing—

To you? said Lady Delacour, with a smile.

This is no time, and no subject for raillery, my dear friend, said Belinda; you assured me, and I believed you, that the idea of Mr. Hervey's return was entirely out of the question, when you prevailed upon me to delay my journey to Oakly Park. As I now understand that your ladyship has changed your mind, I must request your ladyship will permit me—

I will permit you to do what you please, dearest Belinda, except to call me *your ladyship* twice in one sentence. You shall go to Oakly Park the

day after to-morrow: will that content you, my dear? I admire your strength of mind; you are much fitter to conduct yourself, than I am to conduct you. I have done with raillery—my first, my only, object is your happiness—I respect and esteem as much as I love you, and I love you better than any thing upon earth—Power excepted, you will say—power not excepted, believe me; and, if you are one of those strange people that cannot believe without proof, you shall have proof positive upon the spot, added she, ringing the bell as she spoke. I will no longer contend for power over your mind, with your friend at Oakly Park. I will give orders, in your presence, to Marriott, to prepare for our march—I did not call it retreat; but there is nothing shows so much generalship as a good retreat, unless it be a great victory. I am, I confess, rather prejudiced in favour of victory.

So am I, said Belinda with a smile. I am so strongly prejudiced in favour of victory, that rather than obtain no other, I would even be content with a victory over myself.

Scarcely had Belinda pronounced these words, when Lord Delacour, who had dined in town, entered the room, accompanied by Mr. Vincent.

Give me leave, Lady Delacour, to introduce to you, said his lordship, a young gentleman, who has a great, and, I am sure, a most disinterested desire to cultivate your ladyship's further acquaintance.

Lady Delacour received him with all the politeness imaginable; and even her prepossessions in favour of Clarence Hervey could not prevent her from being struck with his appearance. *Il a infiniment l'air d'un héros de roman*, thought she, and Belinda is not quite so great a philosopher as I imagined. In due time her ladyship recollected

that she had orders to give to Marriott about her journey, that made it absolutely necessary she should leave Miss Portman to entertain Mr. Vincent, if possible, without her, for a few minutes; and Lord Delacour departed, contenting himself with the usual excuse of—*letters to write*.

I ought to be delighted with your gallantry, Mr. Vincent, said Belinda, in travelling so many miles to remind me of my promise about Oakly Park; but on the contrary, I am sorry you have taken so much unnecessary trouble: Lady Delacour is, at this instant, preparing for our journey to Mr. Percival's—We intend to set out the day after to-morrow.

I am heartily glad of it—I shall be infinitely overpaid for my journey, by having the pleasure of going back with you.

After some conversation upon different subjects, Mr. Vincent, with an air of frankness which was peculiarly pleasing to Belinda, put into her hands an anonymous letter, which he had received the preceding day.

It is not worth your reading, said he; but I know you too well to fear that it should give you any pain, and I hope you know me too well to apprehend that it could make any impression on my mind.

Belinda read with some surprise:

'Rash young man! beware of connecting yourself with the lady to whom you have lately been drawn in to pay your addresses. She is the most artful of women. She has been educated, as you may find upon inquiry, by one whose successful trade it has been to draw in young men of fortune for her nieces, whence she has obtained the appellation of *the match-maker general*. The only niece,

whom she could not get rid of any other way, she sent to the most dissipated and unprincipled viscountess in town. The viscountess fell sick, and, as it was universally reported last winter, the young lady was, immediately upon her friend's death, to have been married to the viscount widower. But the viscountess detected the connection, and the young lady, to escape from her friend's rage, and from public shame, was obliged to retreat to certain shades in the neighbourhood of Harrowgate; where she passed herself for a saint upon those, who were too honourable themselves to be suspicious of others.

'At length the quarrel between her and the viscountess was made up, by her address and boldness, in declaring, that if she was not recalled, she would divulge some secrets respecting a certain *mysterious boudoir* in her ladyship's house. This threat terrified the viscountess, who sent off express for her late discarded humble companion. The quarrel was hushed up, and the young lady is now with her noble friend at Twickenham. The person, who used to be let up the private stairs into the boudoir, by Mrs. Marriott, is now more conveniently received at Twickenham.'

Much more was said by the letter writer, in the same strain. The name of Clarence Hervey, in the last page, caught Belinda's eye, and with a trepidation, which she did not feel at the beginning of this epistle, she read the conclusion.

'The viscount is not supposed to have been unrivalled in the young lady's favour. A young gentleman, of large fortune, great talents, and uncommon powers of pleasing, has, for some months, been her secret object; but he has been prudent enough to escape her matrimonial snares, though he carries on a correspondence with her, through the means

of her friend, the viscountess, to whom he privately writes. The noble lady has bargained to make over to her confidante all her interest in Hervey's heart. He is expected every day to return from his tour; and, if the schemes upon him can be brought to bear, the promised return to the neighbourhood of Harrowgate will never be thought of. Mr. Vincent will be left in the lurch; he will not even have the lady's fair hand—her *fair* heart is Clarence Hervey's, at all events. Further particulars shall be communicated to Mr. Vincent, if he pays due attention to this warning from

‘A SINCERE FRIEND.’

As soon as Belinda had finished this curious production, she thanked Mr. Vincent, with more kindness than she had ever before shown him, for the confidence he placed in her, and for the openness with which he treated her. She begged his permission to show this letter to Lady Delacour, though he had previously dreaded the effect which it might have upon her ladyship's feelings.

Her first exclamation was—This is one of Harriet Freke's frolics!—But as her ladyship's indignation against Mrs. Freke had long since subsided into utter contempt, she did not waste another thought upon the writer of this horrible letter; but, instantly, the whole energy of her mind, and fire of her eloquence, burst forth in an eulogium upon her friend. Careless of all that concerned herself, she explained, without a moment's hesitation, every thing that could exalt Belinda: she described all the difficult circumstances, in which her friend had been placed; she mentioned the secret with which she had been entrusted; the honour with which, even at the hazard of her own reputation, *she* had kept her promise of secrecy inviolable,

when Lord Delacour, in a fit of intoxication and jealousy, had endeavoured to wrest from Marriott the key of *the mysterious boudoir*. She confessed her own absurd jealousy, explained how it had been excited by the artifices of Champfort and Sir Philip Baddely, how slight circumstances had worked her mind up almost to phrensy. The temper, the dignity, the gentleness, the humanity, with which Belinda bore with me, during this paroxysm of madness, said Lady Delacour, I never can forget ; nor the spirit with which she left my house, when she saw me unworthy of her esteem, and ungrateful for her kindness ; nor the magnanimity with which she returned to me, when I thought myself upon my death-bed :—all this has made an impression upon my soul, which never, whilst I have life and reason, can be effaced. She has saved my life. She has made my life worth saving. She has made me feel my own value. She has made me know my own happiness. She has reconciled me to my husband. She has united me with my child. She has been my guardian angel. —*She*, the confidante of my intrigues !—*she* leagued with me in vice !—No, I am bound to her by ties stronger than vice ever felt ; than vice, even in the utmost ingenuity of its depravity, can devise.

Exhausted by the vehemence with which she had spoken, Lady Delacour paused ; but Vincent, who sympathized in her enthusiasm, kept his eyes fixed upon her, in hopes that she had yet more to say.

I might, perhaps, you will think, continued she, smiling, have spared you this history of myself, and of my own affairs, Mr. Vincent : but I thought it necessary to tell you the plain facts, which malice has distorted into the most odious form. This is the quarrel, this is the reconciliation, of which

your anonymous friend has been so well informed. Now as to Clarence Hervey.

I have explained to Mr. Vincent, interrupted Belinda, every thing that he could wish to know on that subject. I now wish you to tell him, that I faithfully remembered my promise to return to Oakly Park, and that we were actually preparing for the journey.

Look here, sir, cried Lady Delacour, opening the door of her dressing-room, in which Marriott was upon her knees, locking a trunk ; here's dreadful note of preparation.

You are a happier man than you yet know, Mr. Vincent, continued Lady Delacour ; for I can tell you, that some persuasion, some raillery, and some wit, I flatter myself, have been used, to detain Miss Portman from you.

From Oakly Park, interrupted Belinda.

From Oakly Park, &c.—a few days longer— Shall I be frank with you, Mr. Vincent?—Yes, for I cannot help it. I am not of the nature of anonymous letter-writers : I cannot, either secretly or publicly, sign or say myself *a sincere friend*, without being one to the utmost extent of my influence. I never give my vote without my interest, nor my interest without my vote. Now, Clarence Hervey is my friend. Start not at all, sir—you have no reason ; for if he is my friend, Miss Portman is yours. Which has the better bargain?—But as I was going to tell you, Mr. Clarence Hervey is my friend, and I am his. My vote, interest, and influence, have consequently been all in his favour. I had reason to believe that he has long admired *the dignity of Miss Portman's mind, and the simplicity of her character*, continued her ladyship, with an arch look at Belinda ; and though he was too much a man of genius to begin with

d. the present tense of the indicative mood, 'I love,'
yet I was, and am convinced, that he does love her.

ed Can you, dear Lady Delacour, cried Belinda,
w speak in this manner, and recollect all we heard
: I from Marriott this morning? And to what purpose
to all this?

g To what purpose, my dear? To convince your
friend Mr. Vincent that I am neither fool nor
g knave; but that I deal fairly by you, by him, and
t by all the world. Mr. Hervey's conduct towards
l- Miss Portman has, I acknowledge, sir, been unde-
cided. Some circumstances have lately come to
my knowledge, which throw doubts upon his ho-
l hour and integrity:—doubts, which I firmly be-
lieve he will clear up to *my* satisfaction at least, as
soon as I see him, or as soon as it is in his power:
with this conviction, and believing as I do, that no
man upon earth is so well suited to my friend,—par-
don me, Mr. Vincent, if my wishes differ from
yours: though my sincerity may give you present,
it may save you from future pain.

Your ladyship's sincerity, whatever pain it may
give me, I admire, said Mr. Vincent, with some
pride in his manner; but I see that I must despair
of the honour of your ladyship's congratulations.

Pardon me, interrupted Lady Delacour; there
you are quite mistaken—the man of Belinda's
choice *must* receive my congratulations—he must
do more—he must become my friend. I would
never rest till I had won his regard, nor should I
in the least be apprehensive, that he would not
have sufficient greatness of mind, to forgive my
having treated him with a degree of sincerity
which the common forms of politeness cannot jus-
tify, and at which common souls would be scan-
dalized, past recovery.

Mr. Vincent's pride was entirely vanquished by

this speech ; and with that frankness by which his manners were usually characterized, he thanked her for having distinguished him from *common souls* : and assured her, that such sincerity as hers was infinitely more to his taste, than that refined politeness, of which, he was aware, no one was more perfect mistress than Lady Delacour.

Here their conversation ended ; and Mr. Vincent, as it was now late, took his leave.

Really, my dear Belinda, said Lady Delacour, when he was gone, I am not surprised at your impatience to return to Oakly Park ; I am not so partial to my knight, as to compare him, in personal accomplishments, with your hero. I acknowledge also, that there is something vastly prepossessing in the frankness of his manners ; he has behaved admirably well, about this abominable letter ; but, what is better than all in a lady's eyes, he is *éperdument amoureux*.

Not *éperdument*, I hope, said Belinda.

Then, as you do not think it necessary for your hero to be *éperdument amoureux*, I presume, said Lady Delacour, you do not think it necessary, that a heroine should be in love at all.—So love and marriage are to be separated by philosophy, as well as by fashion. This is Lady Anne Percival's doctrine. I give Mr. Percival joy. I remember the time when he fancied love essential to happiness.

I believe he not only fancies, but is sure of it now, from experience, said Belinda.

Then he interdicts love only to his friends ? He does not think it essential that you should know any thing about the matter. You may marry his ward, and welcome, without being in love with him.

But not without loving him, said Belinda.

I am not casuist enough in these matters to un-

derstand the subtle distinction you make, with the true Percival emphasis, between loving and falling in love. But I suppose I am to understand by loving, loving as half the world do when they marry.

As it would be happy for half the world if they did, replied Belinda mildly but with a firmness of tone that her ladyship felt.—I should despise myself, and deserve no pity from any human being, if after all I have seen I could think of marrying for convenience or interest.

O, pardon me! I meant not to insinuate such an idea; even your worst enemy, Sir Philip Baddely, would acquit you there. I meant but to hint, my dear Belinda, that a heart such as yours is formed for love in its highest, purest, happiest state.

A pause ensued.

Such happiness can be secured only, resumed Belinda, by a union with a man of sense and virtue.

A man of sense and virtue, I suppose means Mr. Vincent? said Lady Delacour. No doubt, you have lately learned in the same sober style, that a little love will suffice, with a great deal of esteem.

I hope I have learned lately, that a great deal of esteem is the best foundation for a great deal of love.

Possibly, said Lady Delacour; but we often see people working at the foundation all their lives without getting any further.

And those who build their castles of happiness in the air, said Belinda, are they more secure? wiser? or happier?

Wiser! I know nothing about that, said Lady Delacour; but happier I do believe they are: for the castle-building is always *a labour of love*, but the foundation drudgery is generally *Love's Labour Lost*. Poor Vincent will find it so.

Perhaps not, said Belinda; for already his solid good qualities——

Solid good qualities, interrupted Lady Delacour. —I beg your pardon for interrupting you; but, my dear, you know we never fall in love with good qualities;—except indeed when they are joined to an aquiline nose——Oh! that aquiline nose of Mr. Vincent's! I am more afraid of it than of all his solid good qualities. He has again, I acknowledge it, much the advantage of Clarence Hervey in personal accomplishments. But you are not a woman to be decided by personal accomplishments.

And you will not allow me to be decided by solid good qualities, said Belinda. So by what must I be determined?

By your heart, my dear—by your heart; trust your heart only.

Alas! said Belinda; how many, many women have deplored their having trusted to their hearts only!

Their hearts—but I said *your* heart—mind your pronouns, my dear, that makes all the difference. But to be serious, tell me do you really and *bonafide*, as my old uncle the lawyer used to say, love Mr. Vincent?

No, said Belinda, I do not love him yet.

But for that emphatic *yet*, how I should have worshipped you! I wish I could once clearly understand the state of your mind about Mr. Vincent, and then I should be able to judge how far I might indulge myself in raillery without being absolutely impertinent. So, without intruding upon your confidence, tell me—whatever you please.

I will tell you all I know of my own mind, replied Belinda, looking up with an ingenuous coun-

tenance. I esteem Mr. Vincent : I am grateful to him for the proofs he has given me of steady attachment and of confidence in my integrity. I like his manners and the frankness of his temper ; but I do not yet love him : and till I do, no earthly consideration could prevail upon me to marry him.

Perfectly satisfactory, my dear Belinda—and yet I cannot be quite at ease, whilst Mr. Vincent is present, and my poor Clarence absent : proximity is such a dangerous advantage even with the wisest of us : the absent lose favour so quickly in Cupid's court as in all other courts, and they are such victims to false reports and vile slanderers.

Belinda sighed—

Thank you for that sigh, my dear, said Lady Delacour. May I ask, would you, if you discovered that Mr. Vincent had a Virginia, discard him for ever from your thoughts ?

If I discovered that he had deceived and behaved dishonourably to any woman, I certainly should banish him for ever from my regard.

With as much ease as you banished Clarence Hervey ?

With more, perhaps.

Then you acknowledge—that's all I want—that you liked Clarence better than you do Vincent ?

I acknowledge it, said Belinda, colouring up to her temples. But that time is entirely past, and I never look back to it.

But if you were forced to look back to it, my dear, if Clarence Hervey proposed for you, would not you cast a lingering look behind ?

Let me beg of you, my dear Lady Delacour, as my friend, cried Belinda, speaking and looking with great earnestness—Let me beg of you to forbear. Do not use your powerful influence

over my heart to make me think of what I ought not to think, or do what I ought not to do. I have permitted Mr. Vincent to address me. You cannot imagine that I am so base as to treat him with duplicity, or that I consider him only as a *pis-aller*—No, I have treated, I will treat him honourably. He knows exactly the state of my mind. He shall have a fair trial whether he can win my love. The moment I am convinced that he cannot succeed, I will tell him so decidedly: but if ever I should feel for him that affection which is necessary for my happiness and his, I hope I shall, without fear even of Lady Delacour's ridicule or displeasure, avow my sentiments, and abide by my choice.

My dear, I admire you, said Lady Delacour: but I am incorrigible; I am not fit to hear myself convinced—after all, I am impelled by the genius of impudence to tell you, that in spite of Mr. Percival's cure for *first loves*, I consider love as a distemper that can be had but once.

As you acknowledge that you are not fit to hear yourself convinced, said Belinda, I will not argue this point with you; but you will allow, added she, as it is said or sung in Cupid's calendar, that,

*Un peu d'amour, un peu de soin,
Mènent souvent un cœur bien loin.*

Belinda broke off the conversation, by singing that beautiful French air.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG.

only interest that honest people can take in the fate of rogues, is in their detection and punishment; the reader then will be so far interested in the fate of Mr. Champfort, as to feel some satisfaction at his being safely lodged in Newgate. The circumstance, which led to this desirable catastrophe, was the anonymous letter to Mr. Vincent.

At the first moment that Marriott saw or heard of this letter, she was convinced, she said, that Champfort *was at the bottom of it*. Lady Dever was equally convinced, that Harriet Freke was the author of the epistle; and she supported this opinion, by observing, that Champfort could neither write nor spell English. Marriott and her were both right. It was a joint, or rather a concerted performance. Champfort, in conjunction with the stupid maid, furnished the intelligence, which Mrs. Freke manufactured; and when she had put the whole into proper style and form, Mr. Champfort got her rough draft fairly copied at his expense, and transmitted his copy to Mr. Vincent.

When all this was discovered by a very slight circumstance. The letter was copied by Mr. Champfort upon a sheet of mourning paper, off which he thought that he had carefully cut the edges; but a bit of the black edge remained, which did not escape Marriott's scrutinizing eye. Lord bless my lady! she exclaimed, this must be the

L. L. H

paper; I mean, may be the paper, that Mr. Champfort was cutting a quire of, the very day before Miss Portman left town. It's a great while ago, but I remember it, as well as if it was yesterday; I saw a parcel of black jags of paper littering the place, and was asked what had been going on? and was told, that it was only Mr. Champfort, who had been cutting some paper, which, to be sure, I concluded my lord had given to him, having no further occasion for; as my lord, and you my lady, were just going out of mourning at that time, as you may remember.

Lord Delacour, when the paper was shown to him, recognized it immediately, by a private mark, which he had put on the outside sheet of a division of letter paper, which, indeed, he had never given to Champfort, but which he had missed about the time Marriott mentioned. Between the leaves of this paper, his lordship had put, as it was often his practice, some bank notes. They were notes but of small value, and when he missed them, he was easily persuaded by Champfort, that, as he had been much intoxicated the preceding night, he had thrown them away with some useless papers. He rummaged through his writing-desk in vain, and then gave up the search. It was true, that on this very occasion, he gave Champfort the remainder of some mourning paper, which he made no scruple, therefore, of producing openly. Certain that he could swear to his own private mark upon this paper, and that he could identify his notes, by their numbers, &c. of which he had luckily a memorandum, Lord Delacour, enraged to find himself both robbed and duped by a favourite servant, in whom he had placed implicit confidence, was effectually roused from his natural indolence; he took such active and successful measures, that Mr.

Champfort was committed to jail, to take his trial for the robbery. To make peace for himself, he confessed, that he had been instigated by Mrs. Freke, to get the anonymous letter written. This lady was now suffering just punishments for her *frolics*, and Lady Delacour thought her fallen so much below indignation, that she advised Belinda to take no manner of notice of her conduct, except simply returning the letter to her, with Miss Portman's, Mr. Vincent's, and Lord and Lady Delacour's compliments and thanks, to a *sincere friend*, who had been the means of bringing villany to justice.

So much for Mrs. Freke and Mr. Champfort, who, both together, scarcely deserve an episode of ten lines.

Now to return to Mr. Vincent. Animated by fresh hope, he pressed his suit with Belinda with all the ardour of his sanguine temper. Though little disposed to fear any future evil, especially in the midst of present felicity, yet he was aware of the danger that might ensue to him, from Clarence Hervey's arrival; he was therefore impatient for the intermediate day to pass, and it was with heartfelt joy, that he saw the carriages at last at the door, which were actually to convey them to Oakly Park. Mr. Vincent, who had all the West Indian love for magnificence, had upon this occasion an extremely handsome equipage. Lady Delacour, though she was disappointed by Clarence Hervey's not appearing, did not attempt to delay their departure. She contented herself with leaving a note, to be delivered to him on his arrival, which, she still flattered herself, would induce him immediately to go to Harrowgate. The trunks were fastened upon the carriages, the imperial was carrying out, Marriott was full of a world of business, Lord Delacour was looking at his horses as usual,

Helena was patting Mr. Vincent's great dog, and Belinda was rallying her lover, upon his taste for 'the pomp, pride, and circumstance' of glorious travelling—

When an express arrived from Oakly Park. It was to delay their journey for a few weeks. Mr. Percival and Lady Anne wrote word, that they were unexpectedly called from home, by ——— Lady Delacour did not stay to read by what, or by whom, she was so much delighted by this reprieve. Mr. Vincent bore the disappointment as well as could be expected; particularly, when Belinda observed, to comfort him, that 'the mind is its own place;' and that hers, she believed, would be the same at Twickenham as at Oakly Park. Nor did she give him any reason to regret that she was not immediately under the influence of his own friends. The dread of being unduly biassed by Lady Delacour, and the strong desire Belinda felt to act honourably by Mr. Vincent, to show him that she was not trifling with his happiness, and that she was incapable of the meanness of retaining a lover as a *pis-aller*; were motives, which acted more powerfully in his favour, than all that even Lady Anne Percival could have looked or said. The contrast between the openness and decision of his conduct towards her, and Clarence Hervey's vacillation and mystery; the belief, that Mr. Hervey was, or ought to be, attached to another woman; the conviction, that Mr. Vincent was strongly attached to her, and that he possessed many of the good qualities essential to her happiness, operated every day more and more strongly upon Belinda's mind.

Where was Clarence Hervey all this time? Lady Delacour, alas! could not divine. She every morning was certain, that he would appear that

d day, and every night she was forced to acknow-
r ledge her mistake. No inquiries—and she had
s made all that could be made, by address and per-
severance—no inquiries could clear up the mys-
lt tery of Virginia and Mrs. Ormond; and her im-
r patience to see her friend Clarence every hour in-
y creased. She was divided between her confidence
- in him, and her affection for Belinda; unwilling to
y give him up, yet afraid to injure her happiness, or
e to offend her, by injudicious advice, and improp-
er interference. One thing kept Lady Delacour
- for some time in spirits—Miss Portman's assurances,
n that she would not bind herself by any promise, or
e engagement, to Mr. Vincent, even when decided
d in his favour; and that she should hold both him
t and herself perfectly free, till they were actually
l married. This was according to Lady Anne and
- Mr. Percival's principles; and Lady Delacour was
t never tired of expressing, directly or indirectly,
her admiration of the prudence and propriety of
their doctrine.

Lady Delacour recollected her own promise, to
give her *sincere congratulations to the victorious
knight*; and she endeavoured to treat Mr. Vincent
with impartiality. She was however now still less
inclined to like him, from a discovery, which she
accidentally made, of his being still upon good
terms with *odious Mrs. Luttridge*. Helena, one
morning, was playing with Mr. Vincent's large dog,
of which he was excessively fond; it was called
Juba, after his faithful servant.

Helena, my dear, said Lady Delacour, take care!
don't trust your hand in that creature's monstrous
mouth.

I can assure your ladyship, cried Mr. Vincent,
that he is the very quietest and best creature in the
world.

No doubt, said Belinda, smiling, since he belongs to you; for you know, as Mr. Percival tells you, every thing, animate or inanimate, that is under your protection, you think, must be the best of its kind in the universe.

But really Juba is the best creature in the world, repeated Mr. Vincent with great eagerness—Juba is, without exception, the best creature in the universe.

Juba the dog, or Juba the man? said Belinda; you know they cannot be both the best creatures in the universe.

Well! Juba the man is the best man—and Juba the dog is the best dog, in the universe, said Mr. Vincent, laughing, with his usual candour, at his own foible, when it was pointed out to him—But, seriously, Lady Delacour, you need not be in the least afraid to trust Miss Delacour with this poor fellow: for, do you know, during a whole month, that I lent him to Mrs. Luttridge, at Harrowgate, she used constantly to let him sleep in the room with her; and now, whenever he sees her, he licks her hand, as gently as if he were a lapdog; and it was but yesterday, when I had him there, she declared, he was more gentle than any lapdog in London.

At the name of Luttridge Lady Delacour changed countenance, and she continued silent for some time. Mr. Vincent, attributing her sudden seriousness to dislike or fear of his dog, took him out of the room.

My dear Lady Delacour, said Belinda, observing that she still retained an air of displeasure, I hope your antipathy to odious Mrs. Luttridge does not extend to every body who visits her?

Tout au contraire, cried Lady Delacour, starting from her reverie, and assuming a playful manner;

I have made a general jail-delivery of all my old hatreds; and even odious Mrs. Luttridge, though a hardened offender, must be included in this act of grace; so you need not fear that Mr. Vincent should fall under my royal displeasure, for consorting with this state criminal. Though I can't sympathize with him, I forgive him, both for liking that great dog, and that little woman; especially, as I shrewdly suspect that he likes the lady's E O table better than the lady.

E O table! Good heavens! You do not imagine that Mr. Vincent—

Nay, my dear, don't look so terribly alarmed! I assure you, I did not mean to hint, that there was any serious *improper* attachment to the E O table; only a little flirtation, perhaps, to which his passion for you has, doubtless, put a stop.

I'll ask him the moment I see him, cried Belinda, if he is fond of play; I know he used to play at billiards at Oakly Park, but merely as an amusement. Games of address, as Mr. Percival says, are not to be put upon a footing with games of hazard.

A man may, however, contrive to lose a good deal of money at billiards, as poor Lord Delacour can tell you. But I beseech you, my dear, do not betray me to Mr. Vincent; ten to one I am mistaken, for his great dog put me out of humour—

But with such a doubt upon my mind, unsatisfied—

It shall be satisfied; Lord Delacour shall make inquiries for me.—Lord Delacour *shall* make inquiries, did I say?—*will*, I should have said. If Champfort had heard me, to what excellent account he might have turned that unlucky *shall*!—What a nice grammarian a woman had need to be, who would live well with a husband inferior to her in understanding! With a superior or an equal, she

might use *shall* and *will* as inaccurately as she pleases. Glorious privilege! How I shall envy it you, my dear Belinda! But how can you ever hope to enjoy it? Where is your superior? Where is your equal?

Mr. Vincent, who had by this time seen his dog fed, which was one of his daily pleasures, returned, and politely assured Lady Delacour, that Juba should not again intrude. To make her peace with Mr. Vincent, and to drive the E O table from Belinda's thoughts, her ladyship now turned the conversation from Juba the dog to Juba the man. She talked of Harriet Freke's phosphoric Obeah woman, of whom, she said, she had heard an account from Miss Portman. She spoke of Juba's marriage, and of his master's generosity to him. From thence she went on to the African slave-trade, by way of contrast, and she finished precisely where she had intended, and where Mr. Vincent could have wished, by praising a poem called 'The Dying Negro,' which he had, the preceding evening, brought to read to Belinda. This praise was peculiarly agreeable, because he was not perfectly sure of his own critical judgement, and his knowledge of English literature was not as extensive as Clarence Hervey's; a circumstance, which Lady Delacour had discovered one morning, when they went to see Pope's famous villa at Twickenham.—Flattered by her present confirmation of his taste, Mr. Vincent readily complied with a request to read the poem to Belinda; they were all deeply engaged by the charms of poetry, when they were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of—Clarence Hervey.

The book dropped from Vincent's hand, the instant that he heard his name. Lady Delacour's eyes sparkled with joy. Belinda's colour rose, but

1
2
3
4
5
6

1

vant, who came in. No letter or packet was to be heard of. It had been directed, Mr. Hervey now remembered, to her ladyship's house in town. She gave orders to have it immediately sent for; but scarcely had she given them, when, turning to Mr. Hervey, she laughed and said—

A very foolish compliment to you and your letter, for you certainly can speak as well as you can write; nay, better I think—though you don't write ill, neither—but you can tell me, in two words, what in writing would take half a volume. Leave this gentleman and lady to 'The Dying Negro,' and let me hear your two words in Lord Delacour's dressing-room, if you please, said she, opening the door of an adjoining apartment. Lord Delacour will not be jealous if he find you *tête-à-tête* with me, I promise you. But you shall not be compelled. You look—

I look, said Mr. Hervey, affecting to laugh, as if I felt the impossibility of putting half a volume into two words. It is a long story, and—

And I must wait for the packet, whether I will or no—Well, be it so, said Lady Delacour. Struck with the extreme perturbation into which he was thrown, she pressed him with no further raillery, but instantly attempted to change the conversation to general subjects.

Again she had recourse to 'The Dying Negro.' Mr. Vincent, to whom she now addressed herself, said, For my part, I neither have, nor pretend to have, much critical taste; but I admire in this poem the manly energetic spirit of virtue which it breathes. From the poem, an easy transition was made to the author; and Clarence Hervey, exerting himself to join in the conversation, observed, that this writer (Mr. Day) was an instance that genuine eloquence must spring from the heart.

Cicero was certainly right, continued he, addressing himself to Mr. Vincent, in his definition of a great orator, to make it one of the first requisites, that he should be a good man.

Mr. Vincent coldly replied, This definition would exclude too many men of superior talents to be easily admitted.

Perhaps the appearance of virtue, said Belinda, might on many occasions succeed as well as the reality.

Yes, if the man be as good an actor as Mr. Hervey, said Lady Delacour, and if he suit 'the action to the word—the word to the action.'

Belinda never raised her eyes whilst her ladyship uttered these words; Mr. Vincent was, or seemed to be, so deeply engaged in looking for something in the book, which he held in his hand, that he could take no further part in the conversation; and a dead silence ensued.

Lady Delacour, who was naturally impatient in the extreme, especially in the vindication of her friends, could not bear to see, as she did by Belinda's countenance, that she had not forgotten Marriott's story of Virginia St. Pierre; and though her ladyship was convinced that *the packet* would clear up all mysteries, yet she could not endure, that even in the interim 'poor Clarence' should be unjustly suspected; nor could she refrain from trying an expedient, which just occurred to her, to satisfy herself and every body present. She was the first to break silence.

To do you justice, my friends, you are all good company this morning. Mr. Vincent is excusable, because he is in love; and Belinda is excusable, because—because—Mr. Hervey, pray, help me to an excuse for Miss Portman's stupidity, for I am dreadfully afraid of blundering out the truth. But why

do I ask you to help me? In your present condition, you seem totally unable to help yourself.—Not a word!—Run over the common-places of conversation—weather—fashion—scandal—duels—deaths—marriages—will none of these do? Suppose, then, you were to entertain me with other people's thoughts, since you have none of your own unpacked—forfeit to arbitrary power, continued her ladyship, playfully seizing Mr. Vincent's book. I have always observed, that none submit with so good a grace to arbitrary power from our sex, as your true men of spirit, who would shed the last drop of their blood, to resist it from one of their own. Inconsistent creatures, the best of you!—So read this charming little poem to us, Mr. Hervey, will you?

He was going to begin immediately, but Lady Delacour put her hand upon the book and stopped him.

Stay; though I am tyrannical, I will not be treacherous. I warn you, then, that I have imposed upon you a difficult, a dangerous task. If you have any 'sins unwhipt of justice,' there are lines which I defy you to read without faltering—Listen to the preface.

Her ladyship then began as follows:

'Mr. Day, indeed, retained, during all the periods of his life, as might be expected from his character, a strong detestation of female seduction * * *. Happening to see some verses, written by a young lady, on a recent event of this nature, which was succeeded by a fatal catastrophe—the unhappy young woman, who had been a victim to the perfidy of a lover, overpowered by her sensibility of shame, having died of a broken heart—he addressed the fair poetess, in whose sentiments he sympathized, in the following manner:

Lady Delacour paused, and fixed her eyes upon Clarence Hervey. He, with all the appearance of conscious innocence, received the book, without hesitation, from her hands, and read aloud the lines to which she pointed :

Swear by the dread avengers of the tomb,
By all thy hopes, by death's tremendous gloom,
That, ne'er by thee deceiv'd, the tender maid
Shall mourn her easy confidence betray'd,
Nor weep in secret the triumphant art,
With bitter anguish rankling in her heart ;
So may each blessing, which impartial fate
Throws on the good, but snatches from the great,
Adorn thy favour'd course with rays divine,
And Heaven's best gift, a virtuous love, be thine !

Mr. Hervey read these lines with so much unaffected, unembarrassed energy, that Lady Delacour could not help casting a triumphant look at Belinda, which said, or seemed to say—

You see I was right in my opinion of Clarence !

Belinda's countenance openly expressed satisfaction ; it seemed to say, that reserve, which had been retained as long as she had any suspicion of his having acted dishonourably, was now dissipated, and her manner towards him totally changed. Had Mr. Vincent been left to his own observations, he would have seen the simple truth ; but he was alarmed and deceived by Lady Delacour's imprudent expressions of joy, and by the significant looks that she gave her friend Miss Portman, which seemed to be *looks of mutual intelligence*. He scarcely dared to turn his eyes toward his mistress, or upon him whom he thought his rival ; but he kept them anxiously fixed upon her ladyship, in whose face, as in a glass, he seemed to study every thing that was passing.

Pray, have you ever played at chess since we

VOL. L.

saw you last? said Lady Delacour to Clarence. I hope you do not forget that you are *my knight*. I do not forget it, I assure you—I own you as my knight to all the world, in public and private—do not I, Belinda?

A dark cloud overspread Mr. Vincent's brow—he listened not to Belinda's answer. Seized with a transport of jealousy, he darted at Mr. Hervey a glance of mingled scorn and rage; and, after saying a few unintelligible words to Miss Portman and Lady Delacour, he left the room.

Clarence Hervey, who seemed afraid to trust himself longer with Belinda, withdrew a few minutes afterward.

My dear Belinda!—exclaimed Lady Delacour, the moment that he was out of the room—how glad I am he is gone, that I may say all the good I think of him. In the first place; Clarence Hervey loves you. Never was I so fully convinced of it, as this day.—Why had not we that letter of his sooner?—Ehat will explain all to us—but I ask for no explanation; I ask for no letter to confirm my opinion, my conviction—that he *loves* you: on this point I *cannot* be mistaken; he fondly loves you.

He fondly loves her!—Yes, to be sure, I could have told you that news long ago, cried the dowager Lady Boucher, who was in the room before they were aware of her entrance: they had both been so eager, the one listening and the other speaking.

Fondly loves her! repeated the dowager—Yes; and no secret, I promise you, Lady Delacour:—and then, turning to Belinda, she began a congratulatory speech, upon the report of her approaching marriage with Mr. Vincent. Belinda absolutely denied the truth of this report; but the dowager continued—I distress you, I see, and its quite out

I of rule, I am sensible, to speak in this sort of way,
I Miss Portman; but, as I am an old acquaintance,
my and an old friend, and an old woman, you'll ex-
10 cuse me. I can't help saying, I feel quite rejoiced
- at your meeting with such a match—Belinda again
1 attempted to declare that she was not going to be
married: but the invincible dowager continued—
every way eligible, and every way agreeable.—A
charming young man, I hear, Lady Delacour: I
see I must only speak to you, or I shall make Miss
Portman sink to the centre of the earth, which I
would not wish to do, especially at such a critical
moment as this. A charming young man! I hear,
with a noble West Indian fortune, and a noble
spirit, and well connected, and passionately in love
—no wonder.—But I have done now, I promise
you; I'll ask no questions—so don't run away,
Miss Portman; I'll ask no questions, I promise
you.

To ensure the performance of this promise, Lady
Delacour asked what news there was in the world.
This question she knew would keep the dowager in
delightful employment.—I live quite out of the
world here; but since Lady Boucher has the cha-
rity to come to see me, we shall hear all the 'se-
crets worth knowing' from the best authority.

Then, the first piece of news I have for you is,
that my Lord and my Lady Delacour are absolutely
reconciled; and that they are the happiest couple
that ever lived.

All very true, replied Lady Delacour.

True! repeated Lady Boucher, why, my dear
Lady Delacour, you amaze me!—Are you in ear-
nest?—Was there ever any thing so provoking?—
There have I been contradicting the report where-
ever I went, for I was convinced that the whole
story was a mistake and a fabrication.

The history of the reformation might not be exact, but the reformation itself your ladyship may depend upon, since you hear it from my own lips.

Well, how amazing!—How incredible!—Lord bless me—but your ladyship certainly is not in earnest? for you look just the same, and speak just in the same sort of way. I see no alteration, I confess.

And what alteration, my good Lady Boucher, did you expect to see? Did you think, that, by way of being exemplarily virtuous, I should, like Lady Q——, let my sentences come out of my mouth only at the rate of a word a minute? Or did you expect, that, in hopes of being a pattern for the rising generation, I should hold my features in penance, immoveably, thus—like some of the poor ladies of Antigua, who, after they have blistered their faces all over, to get a fine complexion, are forced, whilst the new-skin is coming, to sit, without speaking, smiling, or moving muscle or feature, lest an indelible wrinkle should be the consequence?

Lady Boucher was impatient to have this speech finished, for she had a piece of news to tell. Well! cried she, there's no knowing what to believe or disbelieve, one hears so many strange reports; but I have a piece of news for you that you may all depend upon. I have one secret worth knowing, I can tell your ladyship—and one, your ladyship and Miss Portman, I'm sure, will be rejoiced to hear. Your friend, Clarence Hervey, is going to be married.

Married!—married! cried Lady Delacour.

Ay, ay, your ladyship may look as much astonished as you please, you cannot be more so than I was when I heard it. Clarence Hervey! Miss Portman, that was looked upon so completely, you

know, as not a marrying man; and now the last man upon earth that your ladyship would suspect of marrying in this sort of way.

In what sort of way?—My dear Belinda, how can you stand this fire? said Lady Delacour, placing a screen dexterously, to hide her face from the dowager's observation.

Now only guess who he is going to marry, continued Lady Boucher—Who do *you* guess, Miss Portman?

An amiable woman, I should guess, from Mr. Hervey's general character, cried Lady Delacour.

Oh, an amiable woman, I take for granted; every woman is amiable of course, as the newspapers tell us, when she is going to be married, said the dowager; an amiable woman, to be sure; but that means nothing: I have not had a guess from Miss Portman.

From general character—Belinda began, in a constrained voice.

Do not guess from general character, my dear Belinda, interrupted Lady Delacour; for there is no judging, in these cases, from general character, of what people will like or dislike.

Then I will leave it to your ladyship to guess this time, if you please, said Belinda.

You will neither of you guess till doomsday! cried the dowager; I must tell you Mr. Hervey's going to marry—in the strangest sort of way!—a girl that nobody knows—a daughter of a Mr. Hartley.—The father can give her a good fortune, it is true; but one should not have supposed that fortune was an object with Mr. Hervey, who has such a noble one of his own. It's really difficult to believe it.

So difficult, that I find it quite impossible, said Lady Delacour, with an incredulous smile.

Depend upon it, my dear Lady Delacour, said the dowager, laying the convincing weight of her arm upon her ladyship's—depend upon it, my dear Lady Delacour, that my information is correct. Guess whom I had it from.

Willingly. But first let me tell you, that I have seen Mr. Hervey within this half hour, and I never saw a man look less like a bridegroom.

Indeed! well, I've heard too, that he didn't like the match: but what a pity, when you saw him yourself this morning, that you didn't get all the particulars out of him! But let him look like what he will, you'll find that my information is perfectly correct.—Guess whom I had it from. From Mrs. Margaret Delacour: it was at her house that Clarence Hervey first met Mr. Hartley, who, as I mentioned, is the father of the young lady. There was a charming scene, and some romantic story, about his finding the girl in a cottage, and calling her Virginia something or other, but I didn't clearly understand about that. However, this much is certain, that the girl, as her father told Mrs. Delacour, is desperately in love with Mr. Hervey, and they are to be married immediately. Depend upon it, you'll find my information correct. Good morning to you.—Lord bless me! now I recollect, I once heard that Mr. Hervey was a great admirer of Miss Portman, said the dowager.

Your ladyship's information upon that point, I can assure you, from the best authority, was *not* correct, said Belinda.

"You have not the presumption to call your *own* the *best* authority, I hope?" said Lady Delacour.

The inquisitive dowager, whose curiosity was put upon a new scent, immediately fastened her eyes upon Belinda's face; but from that she could make out nothing. Was it because she had not the best

eyes, or because there was nothing to be seen? To determine this question, she looked through her glass, to take a clearer view; but Lady Delacour drew off her attention, by suddenly exclaiming—My dear Lady Boucher, when you go back to town, do send me a bottle of concentrated anima of quassia.

Ah! ha! have I made a convert of you at last? said the dowager, and, satisfied with the glory of this conversion, she departed.

Admire my knowledge of human nature, my dear Belinda, said Lady Delacour. Now she will talk, at the next place she goes to, of nothing but of my faith in anima of quassia; and she will forget to make a gossiping story out of that most imprudent hint, I foolishly gave her, about Clarence Hervey's having been an admirer of yours.

Do not leave the room, Belinda, I have a thousand things to say to you, my dear.

Excuse me, at present, my dear Lady Delacour, I am impatient to write a few lines to Mr. Vincent. He went away—

In a fit of jealousy, and I am glad of it.

And I am sorry for it, said Belinda—sorry that he should have so little confidence in me, as to feel jealousy without cause—without sufficient cause, I should say; for certainly, your ladyship gave pain, by the manner in which you received Mr. Hervey.

Lord, my dear, you would spoil any man upon earth. You could not act more foolishly, if the man were your husband.—Are you privately married to him?—If you be not—for my sake—for your own—for Mr. Vincent's,—do not write till we see the contents of Clarence Hervey's packet.

It can make no alteration in what I write, said Belinda.

Well, my dear, write what you please; but I only hope, you will not send your letter till the packet arrives.

Pardon me; I shall send it as soon as I possibly can:—the ‘dear delight of giving pain’ does not suit my taste.

Lady Delacour, as soon as she was left alone, began to reconsider the dowager’s story: notwithstanding her unbelieving smile, it alarmed her, for she could not refuse to give it some degree of credit, when she learnt that Mrs. Margaret Delacour was the authority from whom it came. Mrs. Delacour was a woman of scrupulous veracity, and rigid in her dislike to gossiping; so that it was scarcely probable a report originating with her, however it might be altered by the way, should prove to be totally void of foundation. The name of Virginia coincided with Sir Philip Baddely’s hints, and with Marriott’s discoveries: these circumstances considered, Lady Delacour knew not what opinion to form; and her eagerness to receive Mr. Hervey’s packet every moment increased. She walked up and down the room—looked at her watch—fancied that it had stopped—held it to her ear—rang the bell every quarter of an hour, to inquire whether the messenger was not yet come back. At last, the long expected packet arrived.—She seized it, and hurried with it immediately to Belinda’s room.

Clarence Hervey’s packet, my love!—Now, woe be to the person who interrupts us! She bolted the door as she spoke—rolled an arm chair to the fire—Now for it! said she, seating herself.—The devil upon two sticks, if he were looking down upon me from the house-top, or Champfort, who is the worse devil of the two, would, if he were peeping through the key-hole, swear I was going to

I open a love letter—and so I hope I am. Now for it! cried she, breaking the seal.

My dear friend, said Belinda, laying her hand upon Lady Delacour's, before we open this packet, let me speak to you, whilst our minds are calm.

Calm! It is the strangest time for your mind to be calm.—But I must not affront you by my incredulity. Speak, then, but be quick, for I do not pretend to be calm; it not being, thank my stars—'*mon métier d'être philosophe.*'—Crack goes the last seal—Speak now, or for ever after hold your tongue, my *calm philosopher* of Oakly Park; but do you wish me to attend to what you are going to say?

Yes, replied Belinda smiling, that is the usual wish of those who speak.

Very true; and I can listen tolerably well, when I don't know what people are going to say; but when I know it all before hand, I have an unfortunate habit of not being able to attend to one word. Now, my dear, let me anticipate your speech, and, if my anticipation be wrong, then you shall rise to explain; and I will, said she (putting her finger on her lips), listen to you like Harpocrates, without moving an eye-lash.

Belinda, as the most certain way of being heard, consented to hear, before she spoke.

I will tell you, pursued Lady Delacour, if not what you are going to say to me, at least what you say to yourself, which is fully as much to the purpose. You say to yourself, Let this packet of Clarence Hervey contain what it may, it comes too late. Let him say, or let him do, 'tis all the same to me,—because—(now for the reasoning)—because things have gone so far with Mr. Vincent, that Lady Anne Percival, and all the world (at Oakly Park), will blame me, if I retract. Then I have actually written to my aunt Stan-

hope; and preparations are absolutely making for my wedding. In short, *things have gone so far*; that I cannot recede; because—*things have gone so far*.—This is the rondeau of your argument. Nay, hear me out, then you shall have your turn, my dear, for an hour, if you please. Let things have gone ever so far, they can stop, and turn about again, cannot they? Lady Anne Percival is your friend, of course can wish only for your happiness. You think she is ‘the thing that’s most uncommon, a reasonable woman:’ then she cannot be angry with you for being happy your own way. So I need not, as the orators say, *labour this point any more*. Now, as to your aunt, your writing to her so precipitately was certainly wrong; that is, contrary to my advice. But the fear of displeasing Mrs. Stanhope a little more or less, is not to be put in competition with the hope of your happiness for life, especially as you have contrived to exist some months in a state of utter excommunication from her favour. After all, you know Mrs. Stanhope will not grieve for any thing but the loss of Mr. Vincent’s fortune; and Mr. Hervey’s fortune might do as well, or almost as well: at least, she may compound with her pride for the difference, by considering, that an English member of parliament is, in the eyes of the world (the only eyes with which she sees), a better connexion than the son of a West India planter, even though he may be a *protégé* of Lady Anne Percival.

Spare me your indignation, my dear!—What a look was there!—Reasoning for Mrs. Stanhope, must not I reason as Mrs. Stanhope does? Now, I will put this stronger still: Suppose that you had actually acknowledged that Mr. Vincent had got beyond esteem with you; suppose that you had *in due form* consented to marry him; suppose that

preparations were at this moment making for the wedding; even in that desperate case I should say to you, You are not a girl, to marry because your wedding gown is made up. Some few guineas are thrown away, perhaps; do not throw away your whole happiness after them; that would be sorry economy. Trust to me, my dear, I should say, as I have to you, in time of need. Or, if you fear to be obliged to one, who never was afraid of being obliged to you, ten to one the preparations for a wedding, though not *the* wedding, may be necessary immediately.—No matter to Mrs. Franks who the bridegroom may be; so that her bill be paid, she will not care the turning of a feather, whether it be paid by Mrs. Vincent or Mrs. Hervey. I hope I have convinced; I am sure I have made you blush, my dear, and that is some satisfaction. A blush at this moment is an earnest of victory. *Io triumphe!* Now I will open my packet; my hand shall not be held an instant longer.

I absolve you from the penance of hearing me for an hour; but I claim your promise to attend to me for a few minutes, my dear friend, said Belinda: I thank you most sincerely for your kindness; and let me assure you, that I should not hesitate to accept from you any species of obligation.

Thanks! thanks!—there's a dear good girl!—my own Belinda!

But indeed you totally misunderstand me; your reasoning——

Show me the fault of it; I challenge all the logic of all the Percivals.

Your reasoning is excellent, if your facts were not taken for granted.—You have taken it for granted, that Mr. Hervey is in love with me.

No, said Lady Delacour; I take nothing for granted, as you will find, when I open this packet.

You have taken it for granted, continued Belinda, that I am still secretly attached to him—and you take it for granted, that I am restrained only by fear of Lady Anne Percival, my aunt, and the world, from breaking off with Mr. Vincent. If you will read this letter, which I was writing to him when you came into the room, perhaps you will be convinced of your mistake.

A letter to Mr. Vincent, and at such a time as this! Then I will go and read my packet in my own room, cried Lady Delacour, rising hastily with evident displeasure.

Not even your displeasure, my dear friend, said Belinda, can alter my determination to behave with consistency and openness towards Mr. Vincent; and I can bear your anger, for I know it arises from your regard for me.

I never loved you so little as at this instant, Belinda.

You will do me justice when you are cool!

Cool! repeated Lady Delacour, as she left the room, I never wish to be as cool as you are, Belinda! So, after all, you love Mr. Vincent—you'll marry Mr. Vincent?

I never said so, said Belinda; you have not read my letter.—Oh, Lady Delacour, at this instant you should not reproach me!

I did you injustice, cried Lady Delacour, as she now looked at Belinda's letter—Send it—send it—you have said the very thing you ought—and now sit down with me to this packet of Clarence Hervey's. Be just to him as you are to Mr. Vincent, that's all I ask—Give him a fair hearing.—Now for it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

VIRGINIA.

CLARENCE HERVEY's packet contained a history of his connexion with Virginia St. Pierre.

To save our hero from the charge of egotism, we shall relate the principal circumstances in the third person.

It was about a year before he had seen Belinda, that Clarence Hervey returned from his travels; he had been in France just before the revolution, when luxury and dissipation were at their height in Paris, and when a universal spirit of licentious gallantry prevailed. Some circumstances, in which he was personally interested, disgusted him strongly with the Parisian belles; he felt that women, who were full of vanity, affectation, and artifice, whose tastes were perverted, and whose feelings were depraved, were equally incapable of conferring or enjoying real happiness. Whilst this conviction was full in his mind, he read the works of Rousseau: this eloquent writer's sense made its full impression upon Clarence's understanding, and his declamations produced more than their just effect upon an imagination naturally ardent. He was charmed with the picture of Sophia, when contrasted with the characters of the women of the world, with whom he had been disgusted; and he formed the romantic project of educating a wife for himself. Full of this idea, he returned to England, determined to carry his scheme immediately into execution; but he was some time delayed, by the difficulty of finding a proper object for his

purpose: it was easy to meet with beauty in distress, and ignorance in poverty; but it was difficult to find simplicity without vulgarity, ingenuity without cunning, or even ignorance without prejudice; it was difficult to meet with an understanding totally uncultivated, yet likely to reward the labour of late instruction; a heart wholly unpractised, yet full of sensibility, capable of all the enthusiasm of passion, the delicacy of sentiment, and the firmness of rational constancy. It is not wonderful that Mr. Hervey, with such high expectations, should not immediately find them gratified. Disappointed in his first search, he did not, however, relinquish his design; and at length, by accident, he discovered, or thought that he discovered, an object formed expressly for his purpose.

One fine evening in autumn, as he was riding through the New Forest, charmed with the picturesque beauties of the place, he turned out of the beaten road, and struck into a fresh track, which he pursued with increasing delight, till the setting sun reminded him that it was necessary to postpone his further reflections on forest scenery, and that it was time to think of finding his way out of the wood. He was now in the most retired part of the forest, and he saw no path to direct him; but, as he stopped, to consider which way he should turn, a dog sprang from a thicket, barking furiously at his horse: his horse was high spirited, but he was master of him, and he obliged the animal to stand quietly till the dog, having barked himself hoarse, retreated of its own accord. Clarence watched, to see which way it would go, and followed it, in hopes of meeting with the person to whom it belonged; he kept his guide in sight, till he came into a beautiful glade, in the midst of which was a neat but very small cottage, with numerous bee-hives in the garden,

surrounded by a profusion of rose-trees, which were in full blow. This cultivated spot was strikingly contrasted with the wildness of the surrounding scenery. As he came nearer, Mr. Hervey saw a young girl watering the rose trees which grew round the cottage, and an old woman beside her, filling a basket with the flowers. The old woman was like most other old women, except that she had a remarkably benevolent countenance, and an air that had been acquired in better days; but the young girl did not appear to Clarence like any other young girl that he had ever seen. The setting sun shone upon her countenance, the wind blew aside the ringlets of her light hair, and the blush of modesty overspread her cheeks, when she looked up at the stranger. In her large blue eyes there was an expression of artless sensibility, with which Mr. Hervey was so powerfully struck, that he remained for some moments silent, totally forgetting that he came to ask his way out of the forest. His horse had made so little noise upon the soft grass, that he was within a few yards of them before he was perceived by the old woman. As soon as she saw him, she turned abruptly to the young girl, put the basket of roses into her hand, and bid her carry them into the house. As she passed him, the girl, with a sweet innocent smile, held up the basket to Clarence, and offered him one of the roses.

Go in, Rachel!—go in, child; said the old woman, in so loud and severe a tone that both Rachel and Mr. Hervey started; the basket was overturned, and the roses all scattered upon the grass. Clarence, though he attempted some apology, was by no means concerned for the accident, as it detained Rachel some instants longer to collect her

flowers, and gave him an opportunity of admiring her finely shaped hands and arms, and the ease and natural grace of her motions.

Go in, Rachel, repeated the old woman in a still more severe tone; leave the roses there—I can pick them up as well as you, child—go in.

The girl looked at the old woman with astonishment; her eyes filled with tears, and throwing down the roses, that she held in her hand, she said, I am going, grandmother. The door closed after her, before Clarence recollected himself sufficiently to tell the old lady how he had lost his way, &c. Her severity vanished as soon as her grand-daughter was safe in the house, and with much readiness she showed him the road for which he inquired.

As soon, however, as it was in his power, he returned thither, for he had taken such good note of the place, that he easily found his way to the spot, which appeared to him a terrestrial paradise. As he descended into the valley, he heard the humming of bees, but he saw no smoke rising from the cottage chimney—no dog barked—no living creature was to be seen—the house door was shut—the window shutters closed—all was still. The place looked as if it had been deserted by its inhabitants—the roses had not been watered, many of them had shed their leaves; and a basket, half full of dead flowers, was left in the middle of the garden. Clarence alighted, and tried the latch of the door, but it was fastened; he listened, but heard no sound; he walked round to the back of the house: a small lattice window was half open, and, as he went toward it, he thought he heard a low moaning voice; he gently pulled aside the curtain, and peeped in at the window. The room was darkened, his eyes had been dazzled by the sun,

ag
nd
so that he could not, at first, see any object distinctly; but he heard the moaning repeated at intervals, and a soft voice at last said—

a
— O, speak to me!—speak to me, once again—only once—only once again, speak to me!

The voice came from a corner of the room to which he had not yet turned his eyes; and as he drew aside more of the curtain, to let in more light, a figure started up from the side of a bed, at which she had been kneeling, and he saw the beautiful young girl, with her hair all dishevelled, and the strongest expression of grief in her countenance. He asked if he could do her any service. She beckoned to him to come in, and then, pointing to the bed on which the old woman was stretched, said—

She cannot speak to me—she cannot move one side—she has been so these three days—but she is not dead—she is not dead!

The poor creature had been struck with the palsy. As Clarence went close to the bed, she opened her eyes, and fixing them upon him, she stretched out her withered hand, caught fast hold of her granddaughter, and then raising herself, with a violent effort, she pronounced the word, Begone! Her face grew black, her features convulsed, and she sunk down again in her bed, without power of utterance. Clarence left the house instantly, mounted his horse, and galloped to the next town for medical assistance. The poor woman was so far recovered by a skilful apothecary, that she could, in a few days, articulate so as to be understood. She knew that her end was approaching fast, and seemed piously resigned to her fate. Mr. Hervey went constantly to see her; but, though grateful to him for his humanity, and for the assistance he had procured for her, yet she appeared agitated when

he was in the room, and frequently looked at him, and at her grand-daughter, with uncommon anxiety. At last, she whispered something to the girl, who immediately left the room; and she then beckoned to him to come closer to the arm chair in which she was seated.

May be, sir, said she, you thought me out of my right mind, the day when I was lying on that bed, and said to you, in such a peremptory tone—Begone!—It was all I could say then—and, in truth, I cannot speak quite plain yet; nor ever shall again. But God's will be done! I had only one thing to say to you, sir, about that poor girl of mine——

Clarence listened to her with eagerness. She paused: and then laying her cold hand upon his, she looked up earnestly in his face, and continued—

You are a fine young gentleman, and you look like a good gentleman, but so did the man who broke the heart of her poor mother. Her mother was carried off from a boarding-school, when she was scarcely sixteen, by a wretch, who, after privately marrying her, would not own his marriage, staid with her but two years, then went abroad, left his wife and his infant, and has never been heard of since. My daughter died of a broken heart—Rachel was then between three and four years old, a beautiful child.—God forgive her father!—God's will be done!—She paused, to subdue her emotion, and then, with some difficulty, proceeded—

My only comfort is, I have bred Rachel up in innocence; I never sent her to a boarding-school.—No, no; from the moment of her birth, till now, I have kept her under my own eye. In this cottage she has lived with me, away from all the world, You are the first man she ever spoke to; the first

man who ever was within these doors. She is innocence itself!—O, sir! as you hope for mercy when you are as I am now, spare the innocence of that poor child!—Never, never come here after her, when I am dead and gone! Consider, she is but a child, sir.—God never made a better creature.—O, promise me you will not be the ruin of my sweet innocent girl, and I shall die in peace!

Clarence Hervey was touched. He instantly made the promise required of him; and, as nothing less would satisfy the poor dying woman, confirmed it by a solemn oath.

Now I am easy, said she—quite easy—and may, God bless you for it! In the village here, there is a Mrs. Smith, a good farmer's wife, who knows us well; she will see to have me decently buried, and then has promised to sell all the little I have for my girl, and to take care of her.—And you'll never come near her more?

I did not promise that, said Hervey.

The old woman again looked much disturbed.

Ah, good young gentleman! said she, take my advice, it will be best for you both. If you see her again, you will love her, sir—you can't help it:—and, if she sees you—poor thing, how innocently she smiled, when she gave you the rose!—O, sir, never come near her when I am gone;—it is too late for me now to get her out of your way.—This night, I'm sure, will be my last in this world—O, promise me you will never come here again!

After the oath I have taken, replied Clarence, that promise would be unnecessary. Trust to my honour.

Honour! O, that was the word the gentleman said, that betrayed her poor mother, and left her afterward to die!—O, sir! sir!—

The violent emotion that she felt was too much

for her—she fell back exhausted—never spoke more—and an hour afterward she expired in the arms of her grand-daughter. The poor girl could not believe that she had breathed her last. She made a sign to the surgeon and to Clarence Hervey who stood beside her to be silent; and listened, fancying that the corpse would breathe again. Then she kissed the cold lips, and the shrivelled cheeks, and the eyelids, that were closed for ever. She warmed the dead fingers with her breath—she raised the heavy arm, and, when it fell, she perceived there was no hope: she threw herself upon her knees:—She is dead! she exclaimed; and she has died without giving me her blessing. She can never bless me again.

They took her into the air, and Clarence Hervey sprinkled water upon her face. It was a fine night, and the fresh air soon brought her to her senses. He then said, that he would leave her to the care of the surgeon, and ride to the village, in search of that Mrs. Smith, who had promised to be her friend.

And so *you* are going away from me too? said she; and she burst into tears. At the sight of these tears Clarence turned away, and hurried from her. He sent the woman from the village, but returned no more that night.

Her simplicity, sensibility, and, perhaps more than he was aware, her beauty, had pleased and touched him extremely. The idea of attaching a perfectly pure, disinterested, unpractised heart was delightful to his imagination: the cultivation of her understanding, he thought, would be an easy and a pleasing task: all difficulties vanished before his sanguine hopes.

Sensibility, said he to himself, is the parent of great talents, and great virtues; and evidently she

possesses natural feeling in an uncommon degree ; it shall be developed with skill, patience, and delicacy ; and I will deserve, before I claim my reward.

The next day he returned to the cottage, accompanied by an elderly lady, a Mrs. Ormond ; the same lady who afterward to Marriott's prejudiced eyes had appeared *more like a duenna than any thing else* ; but who, to this simple, unsuspicious girl, seemed like what she really was, a truly good-natured benevolent woman. She consented, most readily, to put herself under the protection of Mrs. Ormond, provided Mrs. Smith would give her leave. There was no difficulty in persuading Mrs. Smith that it was for her advantage, Mrs. Smith, who was a plain farmer's wife, told all that she knew of Rachel's history, but all that she knew was little. She had heard only hints at odd times from the old woman : these agreed perfectly with what Mr. Hervey had already heard.

The *old gentlewoman*, said Mrs. Smith, as I believe I should call her by rights, has lived in the forest there, where you found her, these many a year—she earned her subsistence by tending bees and making rose-water—she was a good soul, but very particular, especially about her grand-daughter, which, considering all things, one cannot blame her for. She often told me, she would never put Rachel to no boarding-school, which I approved, seeing she had no fortune ; and it is the ruin of girls, to my mind, to be bred above their means ; as it was of her mother, sir. Then she would not never teach Rachel to write, for fear she should take to scrawling nonsense of love-letters, as her mother did before her. Now, sir, this I approved too, for I don't much mind about book-learning myself ; and I even thought it would have been as well if the

girl had not learnt to read ; but that she did learn, and was always fond of, and I'm sure it was more plague than use too to her grandmother, for she was as particular about the books that the girl was to read, as about all the rest. I'm sure I saw her myself in as great a flurry about a bit of old newspaper, that was wrapped round a parcel of linen I took to the house—as great a fuss, sir, as if the whole world had been coming to pieces, lest Rachel should have laid her eyes upon it. Now, observes I, there's the use of reading ; I've carried the paper in my hand this hour, and never thought of any harm, and no harm could it do to me. Pray what is there in it, after all ?

Was Rachel present ?—Did she see this paper ?—interrupted Clarence.

Lord ! no sir, no ; she was tending the bees out of hearing, and the old lady had it in the middle of the fire in a minute. I'm only mentioning it, to show her particularities. She went further than all that, sir ; for she would never let the girl so much as speak to a man—not a man ever went within the doors of the house.

So she told me.

And she told you true enough. But there, I thought, she was quite wrong ; for, seeing the girl must, some time or another, speak to men, where was the use of her not learning how, properly ? Well, sir, I won't tell you all the argufyings I held on this point with her, but all to no purpose ; she was, I take it, on this matter not quite reasonable, and it was but good-natured to humour her. Lord ! madam, continued Mrs. Smith, addressing herself to Mrs. Ormond—Lord ! madam, though it is a sin to be remembering so much the particularities of the dead, I must say there never was an *old lady*, who had more scrupulosities than the de-

ceased. I verily thought, one day, she'd have died, about the picture of a man that Rachel lit upon by accident; as if a picture had any sense to hurt a body. Now, if it had been one of your naked pictures, there might have been some decency in her dislike to it; but it was no such thing, but a very proper picture—a picture, ma'am, of a young sea-officer in his full uniform, quite proper, ma'am.—It was his mother that left it with me, and I had it always in my own room, and the girl saw it, and was mightily taken with it, being the first thing of the kind she ever had lit upon, and the old lady comes in and *took on* till I verily thought she was crazed—Lord! I really could not but laugh; but I checked myself, when the poor old soul's eyes filled with tears, which made me know, she was thinking of her daughter that was dead. When I thought on the cause of her particularity about Rachel, I could not laugh any more at her strangeness. I promised the good lady, that day, in case of her death, to take care of her granddaughter; and I thought, in my own mind, that, in time to come, if one of my boys should take a fancy to her, I should make no objections, because she was always a good, modest behaved girl; and, I'm sure, would make a good wife, though too delicate for hard country-work: but, as it pleases God to send you, madam, and the good gentleman, to take the charge of her off my hands, I am content it should be so, and I will sell every thing here for her honestly, and bring it to you, madam, for poor Rachel.

There was nothing that Rachel was anxious to carry away with her but a little bullfinch, of which she was very fond. One, and but one, circumstance about Rachel stopped the current of Clarence Hervey's imagination, and this, consequently, was ex-

cessively disagreeable to him—her name—the name of Rachel he could not endure, and he thought it so unsuited to her, that he could scarcely believe it belonged to her. He consequently resolved to change it as soon as possible. The first time that he beheld her, he was struck with the idea, that she resembled the description of Virginia in *M. de St. Pierre's* celebrated romance; and by this name he always called her, from the hour that she quitted her cottage.

Mrs. Ormond, the lady whom he had engaged to take care of his Virginia, was a widow, the mother of a gentleman who had been his tutor at college. Her son died, and left her in such narrow circumstances, that she was obliged to apply to her friends for pecuniary assistance.

Mr. Hervey had been liberal in his contributions; from his childhood he had known her worth, and her attachment to him was blended with the most profound respect; she was not a woman of superior abilities, or of much information; but her excellent temper and gentle disposition won affection, though she had not any talents to excite admiration. Mr. Hervey had perfect confidence in her integrity, he believed that she would exactly comply with his directions, and he thought that her want of literature and ingenuity could easily be supplied by his own care and instructions. He took a house for her and his fair pupil at Windsor, and he exacted a solemn promise, that she would neither receive nor pay any visits. Virginia was thus secluded from all intercourse with the world: she saw no one but Mrs. Ormond, Clarence Hervey, and Mr. Moreton, an elderly clergyman, whom Mr. Hervey engaged to attend every Sunday, to read prayers for them at home. Virginia never expressed the slightest curiosity to see any

other persons, or any thing beyond the walls of the garden that belonged to the house in which she lived; her present retirement was not greater than that to which she had long been accustomed, and consequently she did not feel her seclusion from the world as any restraint: with the circumstances that were altered in her situation, she seemed neither to be dazzled nor charmed; the objects of convenience or luxury that were new to her, she looked upon with indifference; but with any thing that reminded her of her former way of life, and of her grandmother's cottage, she was delighted.

One day Mr. Hervey asked her whether she should like better to return to that cottage, or to remain where she was? He trembled for her answer—she innocently replied—I should like best to go back to the cottage, if you would go with me—but I would rather stay here with you, than live there without you.

Clarence was touched and flattered by this artless answer, and for some time he discovered every day fresh indications, as he thought, of virtue and abilities in his charming pupil. Her indifference to objects of show and ornament appeared to him an indisputable proof of her magnanimity, and of the superiority of her unprejudiced mind.—What a difference, thought he, between this child of nature and the frivolous sophisticated slaves of art!

To try and prove the simplicity of her taste and the purity of her mind, he once presented to her a pair of diamond earrings, and a moss rosebud, and asked her to take whichever she liked the best.—She eagerly snatched the rose, crying—O! it puts me in mind of the cottage;—how sweet it smells!

She placed it in her bosom; and then looking at the diamonds, said—They are pretty sparkling

things—what are they?—Of what use are they?—And she looked with more curiosity and admiration at the manner in which the earring shut and opened, than at the diamonds. Clarence was charmed with her. When Mrs. Ormond told her that these things were to hang in her ears, she laughed, and said—How! how can I make them hang?

Have you never observed that I wear earrings? said Mrs. Ormond.

Ay! but yours are not like these—and, let me look, I never saw how you fastened them—let me look.—O! you have holes in your ears, but I have none in mine.

Mrs. Ormond told her that holes could easily be made in her ears, by running a steel pin through them. She shrunk back, defending her ear with one hand, and pushing the diamonds from her with the other, exclaiming—O, no, no!—unless, added she, changing her tone, and turning to Clarence, unless you wish it:—if you bid me, I will.

Clarence was scarcely master of himself at this instant; and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could reply to her with that dispassionate calmness which became his situation and hers.—And yet there was more of ignorance and timidity, perhaps, than of sound sense or philosophy in Virginia's indifference to diamonds; she did not consider them as ornaments that would confer distinction upon their possessor, because she was ignorant of the value affixed to them by society. Isolated in the world, she had no excitements to the love of finery, no competition, no means of comparison, or opportunities of display; diamonds were consequently as useless to her, as guineas were to Robinson Crusoe on his desert island. It could not justly be said that he was free from avarice, *because he set no value on the gold; or that she*

was free from vanity, because she rejected the diamonds. These reflections could not possibly have escaped a man of Clarence Hervey's abilities; had he not been engaged in defence of a favourite system of education, or if his pupil had not been quite so handsome. Virginia's absolute ignorance of the world frequently gave an air of originality to her most trivial observations, which made her appear at once interesting and entertaining. All her ideas of happiness were confined to the life she had led during her childhood; and as she had accidentally lived in a beautiful situation in the New Forest, she appeared to have an instinctive taste for the beauties of nature, and for what we call the picturesque. This taste Mr. Hervey perceived whenever he showed her prints and drawings, and it was a fresh source of delight and self-complacency to him. All that was amiable or estimable in Virginia had a double charm, from the secret sense of his penetration, in having discovered and appreciated the treasure. The affections of this innocent girl had no object but himself and Mrs. Ormond, and they were strong, perhaps, in proportion as they were concentrated. The artless familiarity of her manner, and her unsuspicious confidence, amounting almost to credulity, had irresistible power over Mr. Hervey's mind; he felt them as appeals at once to his tenderness and his generosity. He treated her with the utmost delicacy, and his oath was never absent from his mind: but he felt proudly convinced, that if he had not been bound by any such solemn engagement, no temptation could have made him deceive and betray confiding innocence.

Conscious that his views were honourable, anticipating the generous pleasure he should have in showing his superiority to all mercenary considerations and worldly prejudices, in the choice of

a wife, he indulged, with a species of pride, his increasing attachment to Virginia; but he was not sensible of the rapid progress of his passion, till he was suddenly awakened by a few simple observations of Mrs. Ormond.

This is Virginia's birthday—she tells me she is seventeen to-day.

Seventeen!—is she only seventeen? cried Clarence with a mixture of surprise and disappointment in his countenance—Only seventeen! Why she is but a child still.

Quite a child, said Mrs. Ormond, and so much the better.

So much the worse, I think, said Clarence. But are you sure she's only seventeen?—she must be mistaken—she must be eighteen at least.

God forbid!

God forbid!—Why, Mrs. Ormond?

Because, you know, we have a year more before us.

That may be a very satisfactory prospect to you, said Mr. Hervey smiling.

And to you, surely, said Mrs. Ormond; for I suppose you would be glad that your wife should, at least, know the common things that every body knows.

As to that, said Clarence, I should be glad that my wife were ignorant of *what every body knows*. Nothing is so tiresome to a man of any taste or abilities, as *what every body knows*. I am rather desirous to have a wife who has an uncommon, than a common understanding.

But you would choose, would not you?—said Mrs. Ormond hesitating, with an air of great deference—that your wife should know how to write?

To be sure, replied Clarence colouring—Does *not* Virginia know how to write?

How should she? said Mrs. Ormond—it is no fault of hers, poor girl—she was never taught, you know: it was her grandmother's notion, that she should not learn to write, lest she should write love-letters.

But *you* promised that she should be taught to write, and I trusted to you, Mrs. Ormond.

She has been here only two months, and all that time I am sure I have done every thing in my power; but when a person comes to be sixteen or seventeen, it is up-hill work.

I will teach her myself, cried Clarence—I am sure she may be taught any thing.

By you, said Mrs. Ormond smiling; but not by me.

You have no doubts of her capacity surely?

I am no judge of capacity, especially of the capacity of those I love, and I am grown very fond of Virginia; she is a charming, open-hearted, simple, affectionate creature. I rather think it is from indolence that she does not learn, and not from want of abilities.

All indolence arises from want of excitement, said Clarence; if she had proper motives, she would conquer her indolence.

Why, I dare say if I were to tell her that she would never have a letter from Mr. Hervey till she is able to write an answer, she would learn to write very expeditiously; but I thought that would not be a proper motive, because you forbid me to tell her your future views. And indeed it would be highly imprudent, on your account, as well as hers, to give her any hint of that kind; because you might change your mind, before she's old enough for you to think of her seriously, and then you would not know what to do with her; and after entertaining hopes of becoming your wife, the

would be miserable, I am sure, with that affectionate tender heart of hers, if you were to leave her. Now that she knows nothing of the matter, we are all safe, and as we should be.

Though Clarence Hervey did not at this time foresee any great probability of his changing his mind, yet he felt the good sense and justice of Mrs. Ormond's suggestions; and he was alarmed to perceive that his mind had been so intoxicated, as to suffer such obvious reflections to escape his attention. Mrs. Ormond, a woman whom he had been accustomed to consider as far his inferior in capacity, he now felt was superior to him in prudence, merely because she was undisturbed by passion. He resolved to master his own mind: to consider, that it was not a mistress, but a wife he wanted in Virginia:—that a wife without capacity, or without literature, could never be a companion suited to him; let her beauty or sensibility be ever so exquisite and captivating. The happiness of his life and of hers were at stake, and every motive of prudence and delicacy called upon him to command his affections. He was, however, still sanguine in his expectations from Virginia's understanding, and from his own power of developing her capacity. He made several attempts, with the greatest skill and patience; and his fair pupil, though she did not by any means equal his hopes, astonished Mrs. Ormond by her comparatively rapid progress.

I always believed that *you* could make her any thing you pleased, said she. You are a tutor who can work miracles with Virginia.

I see no miracles, replied Clarence; I am conscious of no such power—I should be sorry to possess any such influence, until I am sure that it would *be for our mutual happiness.*

Mr. Hervey then conjured Mrs. Ormond, by all her attachment to him and to her pupil, never to give Virginia the most distant idea that he had any intentions of making her his wife. She promised to do all that was in her power to keep this secret, but she could not help observing, that it had already been betrayed, as plainly as looks could speak, by Mr. Hervey himself. Clarence in vain endeavoured to exculpate himself from this charge: Mrs. Ormond brought to his recollection so many instances of his indiscretion, that it was substantiated even in his own judgement; and he was amazed to find, that all the time he had put so much constraint upon his inclinations, he had, nevertheless, so obviously betrayed them. His surprise, however, was at this time unmixed with any painful regret: he did not foresee the probability that he should change his mind; and notwithstanding Mrs. Ormond assured him that Virginia's sensibility had increased, he was persuaded that she was mistaken, and that his pupil's heart and imagination were yet untouched. The innocent openness with which she expressed her affection for him, confirmed him, he said, in his opinion. To do him justice, Clarence had none of the presumption which too often characterizes men, who have been successful, as it is called, with the fair sex. His acquaintance with women had increased his persuasion, that it is difficult to excite genuine love in the female heart: and with respect to himself, he was upon this subject astonishingly incredulous. It was scarcely possible to convince him that he was beloved.

Mrs. Ormond, piqued upon this subject, determined to ascertain more decisively her pupil's sentiments.

My dear, said she one day to Virginia, who was feeding her bullfinch,—I do believe you are fonder

of that bird, than of any thing in the world—fonder of it, I am sure, than of me,

O! you cannot think so, said Virginia with an affectionate smile.

Well! fonder than you are of Mr. Hervey, you will allow, at least?

No indeed! cried she eagerly: how can you think me so foolish, so childish, so ungrateful, as to prefer a little worthless bird to him? (the bullfinch began to sing so loud at this instant, that her enthusiastic speech was stopped.)—My pretty bird, said she, as it perched upon her hand, I love you very much; but if Mr. Hervey were to ask it, to wish it, I would open that window, and let you fly; yes, and bid you fly away far from me for ever. Perhaps he does wish it!—Does he?—Did he tell you so? cried she, looking earnestly in Mrs. Ormond's face, as she moved toward the window.

Mrs. Ormond put her hand upon the sash, as Virginia was going to throw it up——

Gently, gently, my love—whither is your imagination carrying you?

I thought *something* by your look, said Virginia blushing.

And I thought *something*, my dear Virginia, said Mrs. Ormond smiling.

What did you think?—What *could* you think?

I cannot—I mean, I would rather not at present tell you. But do not look so grave, I will tell you some time or other, if you cannot guess.

Virginia was silent, and stood abashed.

I am sure, my sweet girl, said Mrs. Ormond, I do not mean, by any thing I said, to confuse or blame you. It is very natural that you should be grateful to Mr. Hervey, and that you should admire, and, to a certain degree, love him.

Virginia looked up delighted, yet with some hesitation in her manner.

He is indeed, said Mrs. Ormond, one of the first of human beings : such even *I* have always thought him ; and I am sure I like you the better, my dear, said she, kissing Virginia as she spoke ; only we must take care of it, or this tenderness might go too far.

How so ? said Virginia, returning her caresses with fondness ; can I love you and Mr. Hervey too much ?

Not me.

Nor him, I'm sure—he is so good, so very good ! --I am afraid that I do not love him *enough*, said she sighing. I love him enough when he is absent, but not when he is present. When he is near me, I feel a sort of fear mixed with my love. I wish to please him very much ; but I should not quite like that he should show his love for me as you do—as you did just now.

My dear, it would not be proper that he should ; you are quite right not to wish it.

Am I ? I was afraid that it was a sign of my not liking him as much as I ought.

Ah, my poor child !—You love him full as much as you ought.

Do you think so ? I am glad of it, said Virginia, with a look of such confiding simplicity that her friend was touched to the heart.

I do think so, my love, said Mrs. Ormond, and I hope I shall never be sorry for it, nor you either. But it is not proper that we should say any more upon the subject now. Where are your drawings ? Where is your writing ? My dear, we must get forward with these things as fast as we can :—that is the way to please Mr. Hervey, I can tell you.

Confirmed by this conversation in her own opinion, Mrs. Ormond was satisfied. From delicacy to

her pupil she did not repeat all that had passed to Mr. Hervey, resolving to wait till the *proper* moment. She is too young and too childish for him to think of marrying yet, for a year or two, thought she, and it is better to repress her sensibility till her education is more finished; by that time Mr. Hervey will find out his mistake.

In the meantime she could not help thinking that he was blind, for he continued steady in his belief of Virginia's indifference.

To dissipate his own mind, and to give time for the developement of hers, he now, according to his resolution, left his pupil to the care of Mrs. Ormond, and mixed as much as possible in gay and fashionable company. It was at this period that he renewed his acquaintance with Lady Delacour, whom he had seen and admired before he went abroad. He found that his gallantry, on the famous day of the battle between the turkeys and pigs, was still remembered with gratitude by her ladyship; she received him with marked courtesy, and he soon became a constant visitor at her house. Her wit entertained, her eloquence charmed him, and he followed, admired, and *gallanted* her, without scruple, for he considered her merely as *une franche coquette*, who preferred the glory of conquest to the security of reputation. With such a woman he thought he could amuse himself without danger, and he every where appeared the foremost in the public train of her ladyship's admirers. He soon discovered, however, that her talents were far superior to what are necessary for playing the part of a fine lady; his visits became more and more agreeable to him, and he was glad to feel, that, by dividing his attention, his passion for Virginia insensibly diminished, or, as he said to himself, became *more reasonable*. In conversing with Lady Dela-

our, his faculties were always called into full play ; in talking to Virginia, his understanding was passive ; he perceived that a large proportion of his intellectual powers and of his knowledge was absolutely useless to him in her company, and this did not raise her either in his love or esteem. Her simplicity and *naïveté*, however, sometimes relieved him, after he had been fatigued by the extravagant gaiety and *glare* of her ladyship's manners ; and he reflected, that the coquetry which amused him in an acquaintance, would be odious in a wife : the perfect innocence of Virginia promised security to his domestic happiness ; and he did not change his views, though he was less eager for the period of their accomplishment.—I cannot expect every thing that is desirable, said he to himself : a more brilliant character than Virginia's would excite my admiration, but could not command my confidence.—It was whilst his mind was in this situation, that he became acquainted with Belinda. At first, the idea of her having been educated by the match-making Mrs. Stanhope prejudiced him against her ; but as he had opportunities of observing her conduct, this prepossession was conquered, and when she had secured his esteem, he could no longer resist her power over his heart. In comparison with Belinda, Virginia appeared to him but an insipid, though innocent child ; the one he found was his equal, the other his inferior ; the one he saw could be a companion, a friend to him for life ; the other would merely be his pupil, or his plaything. Belinda had cultivated tastes, an active understanding, a knowledge of literature, the power and the habit of conducting herself. Virginia was ignorant and indolent, she had few pleasures, and no wish to extend her knowledge. She was so entirely unacquainted with the world, that

it was absolutely impossible she could conduct herself with that discretion which must be the combined result of reasoning and experience. Mr. Hervey had felt gratuitous confidence in Virginia's innocence; but on Belinda's prudence, which he had opportunities of seeing tried, he gradually learned to feel a different and a higher species of reliance, one which it is neither in our power to bestow nor to refuse. The virtues of Virginia sprang from sentiment; those of Belinda, from reason.

Clarence, whilst he made all these comparisons, became every day more wisely and more fondly attached to Belinda; and at length he became desirous to change the nature of his connexion with Virginia, and to appear to her only in the light of a friend or a benefactor. He thought of giving her two thousand pounds, and of leaving her under the care of Mrs. Ormond till some suitable method of establishing her in the world should occur. Unfortunately, just at the time when Mr. Hervey formed this plan, and before it was communicated to Mrs. Ormond, difficulties arose which prevented him from putting it into execution.

Whilst he had been engaged in the gay world at Lady Delacour's, his pupil had necessarily been left much to the management of Mrs. Ormond. This lady, with the best possible intentions, had not that reach of mind and variety of resource, necessary to direct the exquisite sensibility and ardent imagination of Virginia. The solitude in which she lived added to the difficulty of the task; without companions to interest her social affections, without real objects to occupy her senses and understanding, Virginia's mind was either perfectly indolent, or *exalted* by romantic views and visionary ideas of happiness. As she had never seen any thing of society, all her notions were drawn

from books; the severe restrictions which her grandmother had early laid upon the choice of these, seemed to have awakened her curiosity, and to have increased her appetite for books—it was insatiable. Reading, indeed, was now almost her only pleasure; for Mrs. Ormond's conversation was seldom entertaining, and Virginia had no longer those occupations which filled a portion of her day at the cottage.

Mr. Hervey had cautioned Mrs. Ormond against putting *common* novels into her hands, but he made no objection to romances: these, he thought, breathed a spirit favourable to female virtue, exalted the respect for chastity, and inspired enthusiastic admiration of honour, generosity, truth, and all the nobler qualities which dignify human nature. Virginia devoured these romances with the greatest eagerness; and Mrs. Ormond, who found her a prey to *ennui* when her fancy was not amused, indulged her taste; yet she strongly suspected that they contributed to increase her passion for the only man who could, in her imagination, represent a hero.

One night Virginia found, in Mrs. Ormond's room, a volume of St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*. She knew that her own name had been taken from this romance; Mr. Hervey had her picture painted in this character; and these circumstances strongly excited her curiosity to read the book. Mrs. Ormond could not refuse to let her have it; for though it was not an ancient romance, it did not exactly come under the description of a common novel, and Mr. Hervey was not at hand to give his advice. Virginia sat down instantly to her volume, and never stirred from the spot till she had nearly finished it.

What is it that strikes your fancy so much?

What are you considering so deeply, my love? said Mrs. Ormond, observing that she seemed lost in thought. Let us see; my dear, continued Mrs. Ormond, offering to take the book which hung from her hand.—Virginia started from her reverie, but held the volume fast.—Will not you let me read over your shoulder, along with you? said Mrs. Ormond. Won't you let me share your pleasure?

It was not pleasure that I felt, I believe, said Virginia. I would rather you should not see just that particular part that I was reading; and yet, if you desire it, added she, resigning the book reluctantly.—

What can make you so much afraid of me, my sweet girl?

I am not afraid of you—but—of myself, said Virginia sighing.

Mrs. Ormond read the following passage:

“She thought of Paul's friendship, more pure than the waters of the fountain, stronger than the united palms, and sweeter than the perfume of flowers; and these images, in night and in solitude, gave double force to the passion which she nourished in her heart. She suddenly left the dangerous shades, and went to her mother, to seek protection against herself. She wished to reveal her distress to her; she pressed her hands, and the name of Paul was on her lips; but the oppression of her heart took away all utterance, and, laying her hand upon her mother's bosom, she only wept.”

And am not I a mother to you, my beloved Virginia? said Mrs. Ormond. Though I cannot express my affection in such charming language as *this*, yet, believe me, no mother was ever fonder of a child.

Virginia threw her arms round Mrs. Ormond, and laid her head upon her friend's bosom, as if she wished to realize the illusion, and to be the Virginia of whom she had been reading.

I know all you think, and all you feel: I know, whispered Mrs. Ormond, the name that is on *your* lips.

No, indeed, you do not: you cannot, cried Virginia, suddenly raising her head and looking up in Mrs. Ormond's face, with surprise and timidity—How could you possibly know all my thoughts and feelings? I never told them to you; for, indeed, I have only confused ideas, floating in my imagination, from the books I have been reading. I do not distinctly know my own feelings.

This is all very natural, and a proof of your perfect innocence and simplicity, my child. But, why did the passage you were reading just now strike you so much?

I was only considering, said Virginia, whether it was the description of—love.

And your heart told you that it was?

I don't know, said she sighing. But of this I am certain, that I had not the name which you were thinking of, upon my lips.

Ah! thought Mrs. Ormond, she has not forgotten how I checked her sensibility some time ago. Poor girl! she is become afraid of me, and I have taught her to dissemble; but she betrays herself every moment.

My dear, said Mrs. Ormond, you need not fear me—I cannot blame you—in your situation it is impossible that you could help loving Mr. Hervey.

Is it?

Yes; quite impossible. So do not blame yourself for it.

No, I do not blame myself for that. I only blame

myself for not loving him *enough*, as I told you once before.

Yes, my dear ; and the oftener you tell me so, the more I am convinced of your affection. It is one of the strongest symptoms of love, that we are unconscious of its extent. We fancy that we can never do too much for the beloved object.

That is exactly what I feel about Mr. Hervey.

That we can never love him enough.

Ah ! that is precisely what I feel for Mr. Hervey.

And what you ought—I mean, what it is natural you should feel ; and what he will himself, I hope, indeed I dare say, some time or other, wish, and be glad that you should feel.

Some time or other !—Does not he wish it now ?

I—he—my dear, what a question is that ? And how shall I answer it ? We must judge of what he feels by what he expresses : when he expresses love for you, it will then be the time to show yours for him.

He has always expressed love for me, I think, said Virginia—always, till lately, continued Virginia ; but lately he has been away so much, and when he comes home he does not look so well pleased ; so that I was afraid he was angry with me, and that he thought me ungrateful.

O, my love, do not torment yourself with these vain fears ! And yet I know that you cannot help it.

Since you are so kind, so very kind to me, said Virginia, I will tell you all my fears and doubts.—But it is late.—There ; the clock struck one.—I will not keep you up.

I am not at all sleepy, said the indulgent Mrs. Ormond.

Nor I, said Virginia.

Now then, said Mrs. Ormond, for these doubts and fears.

I was afraid that, perhaps, Mr. Hervey would be angry if he knew that I thought of any thing in the world but him.

Of what else do you think?—Of nothing else from morning till night, that I can see.

Ah, then you do not see into my mind. In the daytime I often think of those heroes, those charming heroes that I read of in the books you have given me.

To be sure you do.

And is not that wrong? Would not Mr. Hervey be displeased if he knew it?

Why should he?

Because they are not quite like him. I love some of them better than I do him, and he might think that *ungrateful*.

How naturally love inspires the idea of jealousy! thought Mrs. Ormond. My dear, said she, you carry your ideas of delicacy and gratitude to an extreme; but it is very natural you should: however, you need not be afraid, Mr. Hervey cannot be jealous of those charming heroes, that never existed, though they are not quite like him.

I am very glad that he would not think me *ungrateful*—but if he knew that I dream of them sometimes?

He would think you dreamed, as all people do, of what they think of in the daytime.

And he would not be angry? I am very glad of it.—But I once saw a picture——

I know you did—Well, said Mrs. Ormond, and your grandmother was frightened because it was the picture of a man—hey? If she was not your grandmother, I should say that she was a simpleton. I assure you, Mr. Hervey is not like her, if that is what you mean to ask. He would not be angry at your having seen fifty pictures.

I am glad of it—but I see it very often in my dreams.

Well, if you had seen more pictures, you would not see this so often. It was the first you ever saw, and very naturally you remember it. Mr. Hervey would not be angry at that, said Mrs. Ormond laughing.

But sometimes, in my dreams, it speaks to me. And what does it say?

The same sort of things that those heroes I read of say to their mistresses.

And do you never, in your dreams, hear Mr. Hervey say these sort of things?

No.

And do you never see Mr. Hervey in these dreams?

Sometimes; but he does not speak to me; he does not look at me with the same sort of tenderness, and he does not throw himself at my feet.

No; because he has never done all this in reality.

No; and I wonder how I come to dream of such things.

So do I; but you have read and thought of them, it is plain. Now go to sleep, there's my good girl; that is the best thing you can do at present—go to sleep.

It was not long after this conversation that Sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort scaled the garden wall, to obtain a sight of Clarence Hervey's mistress. Virginia was astonished, terrified, and disgusted, by their appearance; they seemed to her a species of animals for which she had no name, and of which she had no prototype in her imagination. That they were men she saw; but they were clearly not *Clarence Herveys*; they bore *still less* resemblance to the courteous knights of

chivalry. Their language was so different from any of the books she had read, and any of the conversation she had heard, that they were scarcely intelligible. After they had forced themselves into her presence, they did not scruple to address her in the most uncereemonious manner. Amongst other rude things, they said, D—me, my pretty dear, you cannot love the man that keeps you prisoner in this manner, hey? D—me, you'd better come and live with one of us. You can't love this tyrant of a fellow?

He is not a tyrant—I *do* love him, as much as I detest you, cried Virginia, shrinking from him with looks of horror.

D—me! Good actress! Put her on the stage when he is tired of her.—So, you won't come with us?—Good bye till we see you again. You're right, my girl, to be upon your good behaviour, may be you may get him to marry you, child!

Virginia, upon hearing this speech, turned from the man who insulted her, with a degree of haughty indignation, of which her gentle nature had never before appeared capable.

Mrs. Ormond hoped, that after the alarm was over, the circumstance would pass away from her pupil's mind; but, on the contrary, it left the most forcible impression. Virginia became silent and melancholy, and whole hours were spent in reverie. Mrs. Ormond imagined, that, notwithstanding Virginia's entire ignorance of the world, she had acquired from books sufficient knowledge to be alarmed at the idea of being taken for Clarence Hervey's mistress. She touched upon this subject with much delicacy, and the answers that she received confirmed her opinion. Virginia had been inspired by romances with the most exalted notions

of female delicacy and honour ; but from her perfect ignorance, these were rather vague ideas than principles of conduct.

We shall see Mr. Hervey to-morrow ; he has written me word that he will come from town and spend the day with us.

I shall be ashamed to see him after what has passed, said Virginia.

You have no cause for shame, my dear ; Mr. Hervey will try to discover the persons who insulted you, and he will punish them. They will never return here, you need not fear that. He is willing and able to protect you.

Yes ; of that I am sure. But what did that strange man mean, when he said——

What, my dear ?

That, perhaps, Mr. Hervey would marry me ?

Virginia pronounced these words with difficulty. Mrs. Ormond was silent, for she was much embarrassed. Virginia having conquered her first difficulty, seemed resolute to obtain an answer.

You do not speak to me ! Will you not tell me, dear Mrs. Ormond ? said she, hanging upon her fondly—What did he mean ?

What he said, I suppose.

But he said, that if I behaved well, I might get Mr. Hervey to marry me. What did he mean by that ? said Virginia in an accent of offended pride.

He spoke very rudely and improperly ; but it is not worth while to think of what he said or what he meant.

But, dear Mrs. Ormond, do not go away from me now, I never so much wished to speak to you in my whole life, and you turn away from me.

Well, my love, well, what would you say ?

Tell me one thing, only one thing, and you will

set my heart at ease. Does Mr. Hervey wish me to be his wife?

I cannot tell you that, my dearest Virginia. Time will show us. Perhaps his heart has not yet decided.

I wish it would decide, said Virginia sighing deeply; and I wish that strange man had not told me any thing about the matter; it has made me very unhappy.

She covered her eyes with her hand, but the tears trickled between her fingers, and rolled fast down her arm. Mrs. Ormond, quite overcome by the sight of her distress, was no longer able to keep the secret with which she had been intrusted by Clarence Hervey.—And after all, thought she, Virginia will hear it from himself soon. I shall only spare her some unnecessary pain; it is cruel to see her thus, and to keep her in suspense. Besides, her weakness might be her ruin, in his opinion, if it were to extinguish all her energy, and deprive her of the very power of pleasing. How wan she looks, and how heavy are those sleepless eyes! She is not, indeed, in a condition to meet him when he comes to us to-morrow; if she had some hopes, she would revive, and appear with her natural ease and grace.

My sweet child, said Mrs. Ormond, I cannot bear to see you so melancholy; consider, Mr. Hervey will be with us to-morrow, and it will give him a great deal of pain to see you so.

Will it? Then I will try to be very gay.

Mrs. Ormond was so delighted to see Virginia smile, that she could not forbear adding, The strange man was not wrong in every thing he said; you will, one of these days, be Mr. Hervey's wife.

That I am sure, said Virginia, bursting again into tears—that I am sure I do not wish, unless he does,

He does, he does, my dear—do not let this delicacy of yours, which has been wound up too high, make you miserable. He thought of you, he loved you long and long ago.

He is very good, too good, said Virginia sobbing.

Nay, what is more—for I can keep nothing from you—he has been educating you all this time on purpose for his wife; and he only waits till your education is finished, and till he is sure that you feel no repugnance for him.

I should be very ungrateful if I felt any repugnance for him, said Virginia; I feel none.

O, that you need not assure me, said Mrs. Ormond.

But I do not wish to marry him—I do not wish to marry.

You are a modest girl to say so, if you did; and this modesty will make you ten times more amiable, especially in Mr. Hervey's eyes. Heaven forbid that I should lessen it!

The next morning Virginia, who always slept in the same room with Mrs. Ormond, awakened her, by crying out in her sleep with a voice of terror, O, save him!—save Mr. Hervey!—Mr. Hervey!—forgive me!—forgive me!—

Mrs. Ormond drew back the curtain, and saw Virginia lying fast asleep; her beautiful face convulsed with agony.

He's dead!—Mr. Hervey!—cried she in a voice of exquisite distress: then starting up, and stretching out her arms, she uttered a piercing cry, and awoke.

My love, you have been dreaming frightfully, said Mrs. Ormond.

Is Mr. Hervey alive? Where is he? Has he forgiven me? Is it all a dream? cried Virginia, looking round fearfully.

All a dream, my dear! said Mrs. Ormond, taking her hand.

I am very, very glad of it!—Let me breathe.—It was, indeed, a frightful dream!

Your hand still trembles, said Mrs. Ormond; let me put back this hair from your poor face, and you will grow cool, and forget this foolish dream.

No; I must tell it you. I ought to tell it you. But it was all so confused, I can recollect only some parts of it. First, I remember that I thought I was not myself, but the Virginia that we were reading of the other night; and I was somewhere in the Isle of France. I thought the place was something like the forest where my grandmother's cottage used to be, only there were high mountains and rocks, and cocoa-trees and plantains.

Such as you saw in the prints of that book?

Yes; only beautiful, beautiful beyond description! And it was moonlight, brighter and clearer than any moonlight I ever before had seen; and the air was fresh, yet perfumed; and I was seated under the shade of a plane-tree, beside Virginia's fountain.

Just as you are in your picture?

Yes; but Paul was seated beside me.

Paul! said Mrs. Ormond, smiling; that is Mr. Hervey.

No; not Mr. Hervey's figure, though it spoke with his voice—this is what I thought that I must tell you. It was another figure; it seemed a real living person: it knelt at my feet, and spoke to me so kindly, so tenderly; and just as it was going to kiss my hand, Mr. Hervey appeared, and I started terribly, for I was afraid he would be displeased, and that he would think me *ungrateful*; and he was displeased, and he called me *ungrateful Virginia*, and frowned; and then I gave him my hand,

and then every thing changed, I do not know how suddenly, and I was in a place like the great print of the cathedral which Mr. Hervey showed me; and there were crowds of people—I was almost stifled. *You* pulled me on, as I remember; and Mr. Moreton was there, standing upon some steps, by what you called the altar: and then we knelt down before him, and Mr. Hervey was putting a ring on my finger: but there came suddenly from the crowd that strange man, who was here the other day, and he dragged me along with him, I don't know how or where, swiftly down precipices, whilst I struggled, and at last fell. Then all changed again, and I was in a magnificent field, covered with cloth of gold, and there were beautiful ladies seated under canopies; and I thought it was a tournament, such as I have read of, only more splendid; and two knights, clad in complete armour, and mounted on fiery steeds, were engaged in single combat, and they fought furiously; and I thought they were fighting for me. One of the knights wore black plumes in his helmet, and the other white; and as he was passing by me, the vizor of the knight of the white plumes was let down, and I saw it was—

Clarence Hervey? said Mrs. Ormond.

No; still the same figure that knelt to me; and I wished him to be victorious. And he was victorious. And he unhorsed his adversary, and stood over him with his drawn sword; and then I saw that the knight in the black plumes was Mr. Hervey, and I ran to save him, but I could not. I saw him weltering in his blood, and I heard him say, *Perfidious, ungrateful Virginia!* you are the cause of my death!—and I screamed, I believe, and that awakened me.

Well, it is only a dream, my love, said Mrs. Or-

mond; Mr. Hervey is safe; get up and dress yourself, and you will soon see him.

But was it not wrong and *ungrateful* to wish that the knight in the white plumes should be victorious?

Your poor little head is full of nothing but these romances, and love for Mr. Hervey. It is your love for him that makes you fear that he will be jealous. But he is not so simple as you are. He will forgive you for wishing that the knight in the white plumes should be victorious, especially as you did not know the other knight was Mr. Hervey. Come, my love, dress yourself, and think no more of these foolish dreams, and all will go well.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DISCOVERY.

INSTEAD of the open, childish, affectionate familiarity, with which Virginia used to meet Clarence Hervey, she now received him with reserved, timid embarrassment. Struck by this change in her manner, and alarmed by the dejection of her spirits, which she vainly strove to conceal, he eagerly inquired, from Mrs. Ormond, into the cause of this alteration.

Mrs. Ormond's answers, and her account of all that had passed during his absence, increased his anxiety. His indignation was roused by the insult which Virginia had been offered by the strangers who had scaled the garden wall. All his endeavours to discover who they were proved ineffectual; but, lest they should venture to repeat their

visit, he removed her from Windsor, and took her directly to Twickenham. Here he staid with her and Mrs. Ormond some days, to determine, by his own observation, how far the representations that had been made to him were just. Till this period he had been persuaded that Virginia's regard for him was rather that of gratitude than of love; and with this opinion, he thought that he had no reason seriously to reproach himself for the imprudence with which he had betrayed the partiality that he felt for her, in the beginning of their acquaintance. He flattered himself, that even should she have discerned his intentions, her heart would not repine at any alteration in his sentiments: and if her happiness were uninjured, his reason told him that he was not in honour bound to constancy. The case was now altered.—Unwilling as he was to believe, he could no longer doubt,—Virginia could neither meet his eyes, nor speak to him without a degree of embarrassment, which she had not sufficient art to conceal: she trembled whenever he came near her, and if he looked grave, or forbore to take notice of her, she would burst into tears. At other times, contrary to the natural indolence of her character, she would exert herself to please him with surprising energy; she learned every thing that he wished; her capacity seemed suddenly to unfold. For an instant, Clarence flattered himself that both her fits of melancholy and of exertion might arise from a secret desire to see something of that world from which she had been secluded. One day he touched upon this subject, to see what effect it would produce; but, contrary to his expectations, she seemed to have no desire to quit her retirement: she did not wish, she said, for amusements such as he described; she did not wish to go *into the world*.

It was during the time of his passion for her, that Clarence had her picture painted in the character of St. Pierre's Virginia. It happened to be in the room in which they were now conversing; and when she spoke of loving a life of retirement, Clarence accidentally cast his eyes upon the picture, and then upon Virginia. She turned away—sighed deeply; and when, in a tone of kindness, he asked her if she were unhappy, she hid her face in her hands, and made no answer.

Mr. Hervey could not be insensible to her distress or to her delicacy. He saw her bloom fading daily, her spirits depressed, her existence a burden to her, and he feared that his own imprudence had been the cause of all this misery.

I have taken her out of a situation in which she might have spent her life usefully and happily; I have excited false hopes in her mind, and now she is a wretched and useless being; I have won her affections; her happiness depends totally upon me; and can I forsake her? Mrs. Ormond says that she is convinced Virginia would not survive the day of my marriage with another. I am not disposed to believe that girls often die or destroy themselves for love; nor am I coxcomb enough to suppose that love for me must be extraordinarily desperate. But here's a girl, who is of a melancholy temperament, who has a great deal of natural sensibility, whose affections have all been concentrated, who has lived in solitude, whose imagination has dwelled for a length of time upon a certain set of ideas, who has but one object of hope: in such a mind, and in such circumstances, passion may rise to a paroxysm of despair.

Pity, generosity, and honour, made him resolve not to abandon this unfortunate girl; though he felt that every time he saw Virginia his love for

Belinda increased. It was this struggle in his mind, betwixt love and honour, which produced all the apparent inconsistency and irresolution that puzzled Lady Delacour and perplexed Belinda. The lock of beautiful hair, which so unluckily fell at Belinda's feet, was Virginia's; he was going to take it to the painter, who had made the hair in her picture considerably too dark.—How this picture got into the exhibition must now be explained.

Whilst Mr. Hervey's mind was in that painful state of doubt which has just been described, a circumstance happened, that promised him some relief from his embarrassment. Mr. Moreton, the clergyman who used to read prayers every Sunday for Mrs. Ormond and Virginia, did not come one Sunday at the usual time: the next morning he called on Mr. Hervey, with a face that showed he had something of importance to communicate.

I have hopes, my dear Clarence, said he, that I have found out your Virginia's father. Yesterday a musical friend of mine persuaded me to go with him, to hear the singing at the Asylum for children, in St. George's Fields. There is a girl there, who has indeed a charming voice—but that's not to the present purpose. After church was over, I happened to be one of the last that staid; for I am too old to love bustling through a crowd. Perhaps, as you are impatient, you think that's nothing to the purpose; and yet it is, as you shall hear. When the congregation had almost left the church, I observed, that the children of the Asylum remained in their places, by order of one of the governors; and a middle-aged gentleman went round amongst the elder girls, examined their countenances with care, and inquired, with much anxiety, their ages, and every particular relative to their parents. The stranger held a miniature picture in his hand, with

which he compared each face. I was not near enough to him, continued Mr. Moreton, to see the miniature distinctly ; but from the glimpse I caught of it, I thought that it was like your Virginia, though it seemed to be the portrait of a child but four or five years old. I understand that this gentleman will be at the Asylum again next Sunday ; I heard him express a wish to see some of the girls who happened last Sunday to be absent.

Do you know this gentleman's name, or where he lives ? said Clarence.

I know nothing of him, replied Mr. Moreton, except that he seems fond of painting ; for he told one of the directors, who was looking at his miniature, that it was remarkably well painted, and that, in his happier days, he had been something of a judge of the art.

Impatient to see the stranger, who, he did not doubt, was Virginia's father, Clarence Hervey went the next Sunday to the Asylum ; but no such gentleman appeared, and all that he could learn respecting him was, that he had applied to one of the directors of the institution, for leave to see and question the girls, in hopes of finding amongst them his lost daughter ; that in the course of the week he had seen all those who were not at church the last Sunday. None of the directors knew any thing more concerning him ; but the porter remarked, that he came in a very handsome coach, and one of the girls of the Asylum said, that he gave her half a guinea, because she was a little like *his poor Rachel, who was dead* ; but that he had added, with a sigh, " This cannot be my daughter, for she is only thirteen, and my girl, if she be now living, must be nearly eighteen."

The age, the name, every circumstance, confirmed Mr. Hervey in the belief, that this stranger

was the father of Virginia, and he was disappointed and provoked by having missed the opportunity of seeing or speaking to him. It occurred to Clarence, that the gentleman might probably visit the Foundling Hospital, and thither he immediately went, to make inquiries. He was told that a person, such as he described, had been there about a month before, and had compared the faces of the oldest girls with a little picture of a child; that he gave money to several of the girls, but that they did not know his name, or any thing more about him.

Mr. Hervey now inserted proper advertisements in all the papers, but without producing any effect. At last, recollecting what Mr. Moreton told him of the stranger's love of pictures, he determined to put his portrait of Virginia into the exhibition, in hopes that the gentleman might go there and ask some questions about it, which might lead to a discovery. The young artist who had painted this picture was under particular obligations to Clarence, and he promised that he would faithfully comply with his request, to be at Somerset House regularly every morning, as soon as the exhibition opened; that he would stay there till it closed, and watch whether any of the spectators were particularly struck with the portrait of Virginia. If any person should ask questions respecting the picture, he was to let Mr. Hervey know immediately, and to give the inquirer his address.

Now it happened, that the very day when Lady Delacour and Belinda were at the exhibition, the painter called Clarence aside, and informed him that a gentleman had just inquired from him very eagerly, whether the picture of Virginia was a portrait. This gentleman proved to be, not the stranger who had been at the Asylum, but an eminent jeweller, who told Mr. Hervey that his curiosity about the picture arose merely from its striking

likeness to a miniature which had been lately left at his house to be new set. It belonged to a Mr. Hartley, a gentleman who had made a considerable fortune in the West Indies, but who was prevented from enjoying his affluence by the loss of an only daughter, of whom the miniature was a portrait, taken when she was not more than four or five years old. When Clarence heard all this, he was extremely impatient to know where Mr. Hartley was to be found; but the jeweller could only tell him, that the miniature had been called for the preceding day by Mr. Hartley's servant, who said his master was leaving town in a great hurry to go to Portsmouth, to join the West India fleet which was to sail with the first favourable wind.

Clarence determined immediately to follow him to Portsmouth: he had not a moment to spare, for the wind was actually favourable, and his only chance of seeing Mr. Hartley was by reaching Portsmouth as soon as possible. This was the cause of his taking leave of Belinda in such an abrupt manner: painful indeed were his feelings at that moment, and great the difficulty he felt in parting with her without giving any explanation of his conduct, which must have appeared to her capricious and mysterious. He was aware that he had explicitly to Lady Delacour avowed his admiration of Miss Portman, and that in a thousand instances he had betrayed his passion. Yet of her love he dared not trust himself to think, whilst his affairs were in this doubtful state. He had, it is true, some faint hopes, that a change in Virginia's situation might produce an alteration in her sentiments; and he resolved to decide his own conduct by the manner in which she should behave, if her father should be found, and she should become heiress to a considerable fortune. New views might then open to

her imagination ; the world, the fashionable world in all its glory, would be before her ; her beauty and fortune would attract a variety of admirers, and Clarence thought, that perhaps her partiality for him might become less exclusive when she had more opportunities of choice. If her love arose merely from circumstances, with circumstances it would change ; if it were only a disease of the imagination, induced by her seclusion from society, it might be cured by mixing with the world ; and then he would be at liberty to follow the dictates of his own heart, and declare his attachment to Belinda. But if he should find that change of situation made no alteration in Virginia's sentiments, if her happiness should absolutely depend upon the realization of those hopes which he had imprudently excited, he felt that he should be bound to her by all the laws of justice and honour ; laws which no passion could tempt him to break. Full of these ideas, he hurried to Portsmouth in pursuit of Virginia's father. The first question he asked, upon his arrival there, may easily be guessed—

Has the West India fleet sailed ?

No : it sails to-morrow at one o'clock, was the answer.

He hastened instantly to make inquiries for Mr. Hartley. No such person could be found, no such gentleman was to be heard of any where. *Hartley*, he was sure, was the name which the jeweller mentioned to him ; but it was in vain that he repeated it, no Mr. Hartley was to be heard of at Portsmouth, except a pawnbroker. At last, a steward of one of the West Indiamen recollected that a gentleman of that name came over with him in the *Effingham*, and that he talked of returning in the same vessel to the West Indies, if he should ever leave England again.

But we have heard nothing of him since, sir, said the steward. No passage is taken for him with us.

And my life to a china orange, cried a sailor who was standing by, he's gone to kingdom come, or more likely to Bedlam afore this, for he was plaguy crazy in his timbers, and his head wanted righting, I take it, if it was he, Jack, who used to walk the deck, you know, with a bit of a picture in his hand, to which he seemed to be mumbling his prayers from morning to night. There's no use in sounding for him, master, he's down in Davy's locker long ago, or stowed into the tight waistcoat before this time o'day.

Notwithstanding this knowing sailor's opinion, Clarence would not desist from his sounding; because, having so lately heard of him at different places, he could not believe that he was gone either into Davy's locker or to Bedlam. He imagined, that by some accident Mr. Hartley had been detained upon the road to Portsmouth; and in the expectation that he would certainly arrive before the fleet should sail, Clarence waited with tolerable patience. He waited, however, in vain; he saw the Effingham and the whole fleet sail—no Mr. Hartley arrived. As he hailed one of the boats of the Effingham, which was rowing out with some passengers, who had been too late to get on board, his friend the sailor answered:

We've no crazy man here: I told you, master, he'd never go out no more in the Effingham. He's where I said, master, you'll find, or nowhere.

Mr. Hervey remained some days at Portsmouth after the fleet had sailed, in hopes that he might yet obtain some information; but none could be had: neither could any further tidings be obtained from the jeweller who had first mentioned Mr. Hartley. Despairing of success in the object of his

journey, he however determined to delay his return to town for some time, in hopes that absence might efface the impression which had been made on the heart of Virginia. He made a tour along the picturesque coasts of Dorset and Devonshire, and it was during this excursion that he wrote the letters to Lady Delacour which have so often been mentioned. He endeavoured to dissipate his thoughts by new scenes and employments; but all his ideas involuntarily centred in Belinda. If he saw new characters, he compared them with hers, or considered how far she would approve or condemn them. The books that he read were perused with a constant reference to what she would think or feel; and during his whole journey he never beheld any beautiful prospect, without wishing that it could at the same instant be seen by Belinda. If her name were mentioned but once in his letters, it was because he dared not trust himself to speak of her; she was for ever present to his mind: but whilst he was writing to Lady Delacour, her idea pressed more strongly upon his heart; he recollected, that it was she who first gave him a just insight into her ladyship's real character; he recollected, that she had joined with him in the benevolent design of reconciling her to Lord Delacour, and of creating in her mind a taste for domestic happiness. This remembrance operated powerfully to excite him to fresh exertions, and the eloquence which touched Lady Delacour so much in these "*edifying*" letters, as she called them, was in fact inspired by Belinda.

Whenever he thought distinctly upon his future plans—Virginia's attachment, and the hopes which he had imprudently inspired, appeared insuperable obstacles to his union with Miss Portman; but, in *more sanguine* moments, he flattered himself with

a confused notion that these difficulties would vanish. Great were his surprise and alarm, when he received that letter of Lady Delacour's, in which she announced the probability of Belinda's marriage with Mr. Vincent. By one of those small unfortunate accidents, which sometimes occur in the most important moments of our lives, he did not receive this letter till nearly a fortnight after it should have come to his hands. The instant he received it he set out on his way home; he travelled with all that expedition which money can command in England; his first thought, and first wish, when he arrived in town, were to go to Lady Delacour's; but he checked his impatience, and proceeded immediately to Twickenham, to have his fate decided by Virginia. It was with the most painful sensations that he saw her again. The accounts which he received from Mrs. Ormond, convinced him that absence had produced none of the effects which he expected on the mind of her pupil. Mrs. Ormond was naturally both of an affectionate disposition and a timid temper; she had become excessively fond of Virginia, and her anxiety was more than in proportion to her love; it sometimes balanced and even overbalanced her regard and respect for Clarence Hervey himself. When he spoke of his attachment to Belinda, and of his doubts respecting Virginia, she could no longer restrain her emotion.

O! indeed! Mr. Hervey, said she, this is no time for reasoning and doubting. No man in his senses—no man who is not wilfully blind, could doubt her being distractedly fond of you.

I am sorry for it, said Clarence.

And why? O, why, Mr. Hervey? Don't you recollect the time when you were all impatience to call her yours—when you thought her the most charming creature in the whole world?

I had not seen Belinda Portman then.

And I wish to heaven you never had seen her !
But O, surely, Mr. Hervey, you will not desert my Virginia !—Must her health, her happiness, her reputation, all be the sacrifice ?

Reputation, Mrs. Ormond !

Reputation, Mr. Hervey !—You do not know in what light she is considered here ; nor did I till lately. But I tell you, her reputation is injured, fatally injured. It is whispered, and more than whispered every where, that she is your mistress. A woman came here the other day with the bullfinch ; and she looked at me, and spoke in such an extraordinary way, that I was shocked more than I can express. I need not tell you all the particulars ; it is enough that I have made inquiries, and am sure, too sure, of what I say, that nothing but your marriage with Virginia can save her reputation ; or—

Mrs. Ormond stopped short ; for at this instant Virginia entered the room, walking in her slow manner, as if she were in a deep reverie.

Since my return, said Clarence in an embarrassed voice, I have scarcely heard a syllable from Miss St. Pierre's lips.

Miss St. Pierre !—He used to call me Virginia, said she, turning to Mrs. Ormond—he is angry with me—he used to call me Virginia.

But you were a child then, you know, my love, said Mrs. Ormond.

And I wish I was still a child, said Virginia.—Then, after a long pause, she approached Mr. Hervey with extreme timidity, and opening a portfolio which lay on the table, she said to him :

If you are at leisure—if I do not interrupt you—would you look at these drawings ; though they are not worth your seeing, except as proofs that *I can conquer my natural indolence ?*

The drawings were views which she had painted from memory, of scenes in the New Forest, near her grandmother's cottage. That cottage was drawn with an exactness that proved how fresh it was in her remembrance. Many recollections rushed forcibly into Clarence Hervey's mind at the sight of this cottage. The charming image of Virginia, as it first struck his fancy; the smile, the innocent smile, with which she offered him the finest rose in her basket; the stern voice in which her grandmother spoke to her; the prophetic fears of her protectress; the figure of the dying woman; the solemn promise he made to her; all recurred in rapid succession to his memory.

You don't seem to like that, said Virginia; and then putting another drawing into his hands, Perhaps this may please you better.

They are beautiful; they are surprisingly well done! exclaimed he.

I knew he would like them! I told you so! cried Mrs. Ormond in a triumphant tone.

You see, said Virginia, that though you have heard scarcely a syllable from Miss St. Pierre's lips, since your return, yet she has not been unmindful of your wishes in your absence. You told her, some time ago, that you wished she would try to improve in drawing. She has done her best. But do not trouble yourself to look at them any longer, said Virginia, taking one of her drawings from his hand; I merely wanted to show you, that though I have no genius, I have some—

Her voice faltered so, that she could not pronounce the word *gratitude*.

Mrs. Ormond pronounced it for her; and added, I can answer for it, that Virginia is not ungrateful.

Ungrateful! repeated Clarence; who ever thought

her so? Why did you put these ideas into her mind?

Virginia, resting her head on Mrs. Ormond's shoulder, wept bitterly.

You have worked upon her sensibility till you have made her miserable, cried Clarence angrily. Virginia, listen to me; look at me, said he, affectionately taking her hand: but she pressed closer to Mrs. Ormond, and would not raise her head.—Do not consider me as your master—your tyrant—do not imagine that I think you ungrateful!

O, I am—I am—I am ungrateful to you, cried she, sobbing; but Mrs. Ormond never told me so: do not blame her; she has never worked upon my sensibility. Do you think, said she, looking up, while a transient expression of indignation passed over her countenance—do you think I cannot *feel* without having been taught?

Clarence uttered a deep sigh.

But if you feel too much, my dearest Virginia—if you give way to your feelings in this manner, said Mrs. Ormond, you will make both yourself and Mr. Hervey unhappy.

Heaven forbid!—The first wish of my soul is—She paused.—I should be the most ungrateful wretch in the world, if I were to make him unhappy.

But if he sees you miserable, Virginia?

Then he shall not see it, said she, wiping the tears from her face.

To imagine that you were unhappy, and that you concealed it from us, would be still worse, said Clarence.

But why should you imagine it? replied Virginia; you are too good, too kind; but do not fancy that I am not happy; I am sure I ought to be happy.

Do you regret your cottage? said Clarence: these drawings show how well you remember it.

Virginia coloured; and with some hesitation answered: Is it my fault, if I cannot forget?

You were happier then, Virginia, than you are now, you will confess, said Mrs. Ormond, who was not a woman of refined delicacy, and who thought, that the best chance she had of working upon Mr. Hervey's sense of honour, was, by making it plain to him, how much her pupil's affections were engaged.

Virginia made no answer to this question, and her silence touched Clarence more than any thing she could have said. When Mrs. Ormond repeated her question, he relieved the trembling girl by saying:

My dear Mrs. Ormond, confidence must be won, not demanded.

I have no right to *insist* upon confessions, I know, said Mrs. Ormond; but—

Confessions—I do not wish to conceal any thing; but I think sincerity is not *always*, in our sex, consistent with—I mean—I don't know what I mean—what I say—or what I ought to say, cried Virginia; and she sunk down on a sofa, in extreme confusion.

Why will you agitate her, Mrs. Ormond, in this manner? said Mr. Hervey with an expression of sudden anger. It was succeeded by a look of such tender compassion for Virginia, that Mrs. Ormond rejoiced to have excited his anger: at any price, she wished to serve her beloved pupil.

Do not be in the least apprehensive, my dear Virginia, that we should take ungenerous advantage of the openness and simplicity of your character, said Mr. Hervey.

O, no, no; I cannot, do not apprehend any thing ungenerous from you—you are—you ever have

been my best, my most generous friend! But I fear that I have not the simplicity of character, the openness that you imagine: and yet I am sure—I wish, from the bottom of my heart—I wish to do right, if I knew how. But there is not one, no not one person in the whole world, continued she, her eyes moving from Mrs. Ormond to Mr. Hervey, and from him to Mrs. Ormond again—not one person in the whole world I dare—I ought to lay my heart open to. I have, perhaps, said more than is proper already. But this I know, added she in a firm tone, rising and addressing herself to Clarence: *you shall never be made unhappy by me.* And do not think about my happiness so much, said she, forcing a smile. I am, I will be perfectly happy; only let me always know your wishes, your sentiments, your feelings, and by them I will, as I ought, regulate mine.

Amiable, charming, generous girl! cried Clarence.

Take care, said Mrs. Ormond; take care, Virginia, lest you promise more than you can perform. Wishes, and feelings, and sentiments, are not to be so easily regulated.

I did not, I believe, say it was easy; but I hope it is possible, replied Virginia; I promise nothing but what I am able to perform.

I doubt it, said Mrs. Ormond shaking her head; *you are—you will* be perfectly happy. O Virginia, my love! do not deceive yourself; do not deceive us so terribly. I am sorry to put you to the blush; but—

Not a word more, my dear madam, I beg—I insist, said Mr. Hervey in a commanding tone; but, for the first time in her life, regardless of him, she persisted.

I only ask you to call to mind, my dearest Vir-

ginia, said she, taking her hand, the morning that you screamed in your sleep, the morning when you told me the frightful dream—were you perfectly happy then?

It is easy to force my thoughts from me, said Virginia, withdrawing her hand from Mrs. Ormond; but it is cruel to do so. And with an air of offended dignity she passed them, and quitted the room.

I wish to heaven, exclaimed Mrs. Ormond, that Miss Portman was married, and out of the way! I shall never forgive myself. We have used this poor girl cruelly amongst us: she loves you to distraction, and I have encouraged her passion, and I have betrayed her—O, fool that I was! I told her that she would certainly be your wife.

You have told her so!—Did I not charge you, Mrs. Ormond—

Yes; but I could not help it when I saw the sweet girl fading away—and besides, I am sure she thought it, from your manner, long and long before I told it to her. Do you forget, how fond of her you were scarce one short year ago? And do you forget, how plainly you let her see your passion? O, how can you blame her if she loves you, and if she is unhappy?

I blame no one but myself, cried Clarence. I must abide by the consequences of my own folly. —Unhappy!—she shall not be unhappy; she does not deserve to be so.

He walked backward and forward, with hasty steps, for some minutes; then sat down and wrote a letter to Virginia.

When he had finished it, he put it into Mrs. Ormond's hands.

Read it—seal it—give it to her—and let her answer be sent to town to me, at Dr. X.'s in Clifford Street.

Mrs. Ormond clasped her hands in an ecstasy of joy, as she glanced her eye over the letter, for it contained an offer of his hand.

This is like yourself; like what I always knew you to be, dear Mr. Hervey! she exclaimed.

But her exclamation was lost upon him. When she looked up to repeat her praises, she perceived he was gone. After the effort which he had made, he wished for time to tranquillize his mind, before he should again see Virginia: what her answer to this letter would be, he could not doubt; his fate was now decided, and he determined immediately to write to Lady Delacour, to explain his situation; he felt, that he had not sufficient fortitude at this moment to make such an explanation in person.—With all the strength of his mind, he endeavoured to exclude Belinda from his thoughts, but *curiosity*—(for he would suffer himself to call it by no other name)—curiosity to know whether she were actually engaged to Mr. Vincent, obtruded itself with such force that it could not be resisted.

From Doctor X—— he thought he could obtain full information, and he hastened immediately to town. When he got to Clifford Street, he found that the doctor was not at home; his servant said, he might probably be met with at Mrs. Margaret Delacour's, as he usually finished his morning rounds at her house. Thither Mr. Hervey immediately went.

The first sound that he heard, as he went up her stairs, was the screaming of a macaw; and the first person he saw, through the open door of the drawing-room, was Helena Delacour. She was standing with her back to him, leaning over the macaw's cage, and he heard her say, in a joyful tone,

Yes; though you do scream so frightfully, my pretty macaw, I love you as well as Marriott ever

did. When my dear, good Miss Portman sent this macaw—My dear aunt! here's Mr. Hervey!—You were just wishing to see him.

Mr. Hervey, said the old lady with a benevolent smile, your little friend Helena tells you truth. We were just wishing for you. I am sure it will give you pleasure to hear, that I am at last a convert to your opinion of Lady Delacour. She has given up all those that I used to call her rantipole acquaintance. She has reconciled herself to her husband, and to his friends; and Helena is to go home to live with her. Here is a charming note I have just received from her! Dine with me on Thursday next, and you will meet her ladyship, and see a happy family party. You have had some share in *the reformation*, I know, and that was the reason I wished that you should be with us on Thursday. You see, I am not an obstinate old woman, though I was cross the first day I saw you at Lady Anne Percival's.—I found I was mistaken in your character, and I am glad of it. But this note of Lady Delacour's seems to have struck you dumb.

There were, indeed, a few words in this note, which deprived him, for some moments, of all power of utterance.

The report you have heard (unlike most other reports) is perfectly well founded. Belinda Portman is going to be married to Mr. Vincent.—I will bring him with us on Thursday.

Mr. Hervey was relieved from the necessity of accounting to Mrs. Delacour for his sudden embarrassment, by the entrance of Dr. X—— and another gentleman, of whom, in the confusion of his mind, Clarence did not at first take any notice. Dr. X——, with his usual mixture of benevolence and raillery, addressed himself to Clarence, whilst the

stranger took out of his pocket some papers, and, in a low voice, entered earnestly into conversation with Mrs. Delacour.

Now tell me, if you can, Clarence, said Dr. X——, which of your three mistresses you like best? I think I left you some months ago in great doubt upon this subject.—Are you still in that philosophic state?

No, said Clarence, all doubts are over—I am going to be married.

Bravo!—But you look as if you were going to be hanged. May I, as it will so soon be in the newspaper—may I ask the name of the fair lady?

Virginia St. Pierre—you shall know her history and mine when we are alone, said Mr. Hervey, lowering his voice.

You need not lower your voice, said Dr. X——, for Mrs. Delacour is, as you see, so much taken up with her own affairs, that she has no curiosity for those of her neighbours; and Mr. Hartley is as busy as——

Mr. who? Mr. Hartley, did you say? interrupted Clarence, eagerly turning his eyes upon the stranger, who was a middle-aged gentleman, exactly answering the description of the person who had been at the Asylum in search of his daughter.—

Mr. Hartley! yes. What astonishes you so much? said Dr. X—— calmly. He is a West Indian. I met him in Cambridgeshire last summer, at his friend Mr. Horton's; he has been very generous to the poor people who suffered by the fire, and he is now consulting with Mrs. Delacour, who has an estate adjoining to Mr. Horton's, about her tenants, whose houses in the village were burnt. Now I have, in as few words and parenthesis as possible, told you all I know of Mr. Hartley's history; but your curiosity still looks voracious.

I want to know whether he have a miniature? said Clarence hastily. Introduce me to him, for Heaven's sake, directly!

Mr. Hartley, cried the doctor, raising his voice, give me leave to introduce my friend Mr. Hervey to you, and to your miniature picture, if you have one.

Mr. Hartley sighed profoundly, as he drew from his bosom a small portrait, which he put into Hervey's hands, saying, Alas! sir, you cannot, I fear, give me any tidings of the original; it is the picture of a daughter, whom I have never seen since she was an infant—whom I never shall see again.

Clarence instantly knew it to be Virginia; but as he was upon the point of making some joyful exclamation, he felt Dr. X— touch his shoulder; and looking up at Mr. Hartley, he saw in his countenance such strong workings of passion, that he prudently repressed his own emotion, and calmly said—It would be cruel, sir, to give you false hopes.

It would kill me, it would kill me, sir!—or worse!—worse!—a thousand times worse! cried Mr. Hartley, putting his hand to his forehead. What, continued he impatiently—what was the meaning of the look you gave, when you first saw that picture? Speak, if you have any humanity! Did you ever see any one that resembles that picture?

I have seen, I think, a picture, said Clarence Hervey, that has some resemblance to it.

When? where?—

My good sir, said Dr. X—, let me recommend to you to consider, that there is scarcely any possibility of judging, from the features of children, of what their faces may be when they grow

up. Nothing can be more fallacious than these accidental resemblances between the pictures of children and of grown-up people.

Mr. Hartley's countenance fell.

But, added Clarence Hervey, you will perhaps, sir, think it worth your while to see the picture of which I speak; you can see it at Mr. F——'s, the painter, in Newman Street; and I will accompany you thither whenever you please.

This moment, if you would have the goodness! My carriage is at the door; and Mrs. Delacour will be so kind to excuse——

O, make no apologies to me at such a time as this, said Mrs. Delacour. Away with you, gentlemen, as soon as you please; upon condition that, if you have any good news to tell, some of you will remember, in the midst of your joy, that such an old woman as Mrs. Margaret Delacour exists, who loves to hear *good* news of those who deserve it.

It was so late in the day, when they got to Newman Street, that they were obliged to light candles. Trembling with eagerness, Mr. Hartley drew near, while Clarence held the light to the picture.

It is so like, said he, looking at his miniature, that I dare not believe my senses. Dr. X——, pray do you look. My head is so dizzy, and my eyes so——What do you think, sir? What do you say, doctor?

That the likeness is certainly striking—but this seems to be a fancy piece.

A fancy piece! repeated Mr. Hartley with terror:—Why then did you bring me here?—A fancy piece!

No, sir; it is a portrait, said Clarence; and if you will be calm, I will tell you more.—

I will be calm;—only—is she alive?

se
of
The lady of whom this is the portrait is alive, replied Clarence Hervey, who was obliged to exert his utmost command over himself, to maintain that composure which he saw was necessary; the lady of whom this is the portrait is alive, and you shall see her to-morrow.

O, why not now? Cannot I see her now? I must see her to-night: this instant, sir!

It is impossible, said Mr. Hervey, that you should see her this instant, for she is some miles off, at Twickenham.

It is too late to go thither now; you cannot think of it, Mr. Hartley, continued Dr. X—in a tone of command, to which he yielded more readily than to reason.

f
d
n
o
Clarence had the presence of mind to recollect, that it would be necessary to prepare poor Virginia for this meeting, and he sent a messenger immediately, to request that Mrs. Ormond would communicate the intelligence with all the caution in her power.

r-
s-
r,
e,
y
u
The next morning, Mr. Hartley and Mr. Hervey set off together for Twickenham. In their way thither, Clarence gradually confirmed Mr. Hartley in the belief that Virginia was his daughter, by relating all the circumstances that he had learned from her grandmother, and from Mrs. Smith, the farmer's wife, with whom she had formerly been acquainted: the name, the age, every particular, as it was disclosed, heightened his security and his joy.

For some time Mr. Hartley's mind was so intent, that he could not listen to any thing; but, at last, Clarence engaged his attention, and suspended his anxiety, by giving him a history of his own connection with Virginia, from the day of his first discovering her in the New Forest, to the letter which

he had just written, to offer her his hand. The partiality, which it was suspected Virginia felt for him, was the only circumstance which he suppressed, because, notwithstanding all Mrs. Ormond had said, and all he had himself heard and seen, his obstinate incredulity required confirmation under her own hand, or positively from her own lips. He still fancied it was possible, that change of situation might alter her views and sentiments; and he earnestly entreated that she might be left entirely to her own decision. It was necessary to make this stipulation with her father; for, in the excess of his gratitude for the kindness which Clarence had shown to her, he protested that he should look upon her as a monster if she did not love him: he added, that if Mr. Hervey had not a farthing, he should prefer him to every man upon earth: he however promised that he would conceal his wishes, and that his daughter should act entirely from the dictates of her own mind. In the fulness of his heart, he told Clarence all those circumstances of his conduct towards Virginia's mother, which had filled his soul with remorse. She was scarcely sixteen when he ran away with her from a boarding-school; he was at that time a gay officer, she a sentimental girl, who had been spoiled by early novel-reading. Her father had a small place at court, lived beyond his fortune, educated his daughter, to whom he could give no portion, as if she were to be heiress to a large estate; then died, and left his widow absolutely in penury. This widow was the old lady who lived in the cottage in the New Forest. It was just at the time of her husband's death, and of her own distress, that she heard of the elopement of her daughter from school. Mr. Hartley's parents were so much incensed by the match, that he was prevailed upon

to separate from his wife, and to go abroad, to push his fortune in the army. His marriage had been secret, his own friends disavowed it, notwithstanding the repeated, urgent entreaties of his wife, and of her mother, who was her only surviving relation. His wife, on her death-bed, wrote to urge him to take charge of his daughter; and, to make the appeal stronger to his feelings, she sent him a picture of his little girl, who was then about four years old. Mr. Hartley, however, was intent upon forming a new connection with the rich widow of a planter in Jamaica. He married the widow, took possession of her fortune, and all his affections soon were fixed upon a son, for whom he formed, even from the moment of his birth, various schemes of aggrandizement: the boy lived till he was about ten years old, when he caught a fever, which at that time raged in Jamaica, and, after a few days illness, died. His mother was carried off by the same disease; and Mr. Hartley, left alone in the midst of his wealth, felt how insufficient it was to happiness. Remorse now seized him: in the desertion of his daughter he could not rest, but returned to England in search of her. To this neglected child he now looked forward, for the peace and happiness of the remainder of his life. Disappointment in all his inquiries for some months preyed upon his spirits to such a degree, that his intellects were at times disordered: this derangement was the cause of his not sooner recovering his child. He was in confinement during the time that Clarence Hervey's advertisements were inserted in the papers; and his illness was also the cause of his not going to Portsmouth, and sailing in the *Effingham*, as he had originally intended. So that the sailor's conjecture, after all, was right, or nearly so. The history of his connection with Mr.

Horton would be uninteresting to the reader; it is enough to say, that he was prevailed upon by that gentleman to spend some time in the country with him, for the recovery of his health. And it was there that he became acquainted with Dr. X——, who introduced him, as we have seen, to Mrs. Margaret Delacour, at whose house he met Clarence Hervey. This is the most succinct account that we can give of him and his affairs. His own account was ten times as long; but we spare the reader his incoherencies and reflections, because, perhaps, they are in a hurry to get to Twickenham, and to hear of his meeting with Virginia.

Mrs. Ormond found it no easy task to prepare Virginia for the sight of Mr. Hartley. Virginia had scarcely ever spoken of her father; but the remembrance of things which she had heard of him from her grandmother, was fresh in her mind; she had often pictured him in her fancy, and she had secretly nourished the hope that she should not for ever be a *deserted child*. Mrs. Ormond had observed, that in those romances of which Virginia was so fond, every thing that related to children who were deserted by their parents affected her strongly.

The belief in what the French call *la force du sang* was suited to her affectionate temper and ardent imagination; and it had taken full possession of her mind. The eloquence of romance persuaded her, that she should not only discover, but love her father with intuitive filial piety, and she longed to experience those *yearnings* of affection of which she had read so much.

The first moment that Mrs. Ormond began to speak of Mr. Clarence Hervey's hopes of discovering her father, she was transported with joy.

My father!—How delightful that word *father*!

sounds!—*My father!*—May I say, *my father?*—And will he own me, and will he love me, and will he give me his blessing, and will he fold me in his arms, and call me his daughter, his dear daughter?—O, how I shall love him! I will make it the whole business of my life to please him!

The *whole* business? said Mrs. Ormond, smiling.

Not the whole, said Virginia; I hope my father will like Mr. Hervey. Did not you say that he is rich? I wish that my father may be *very* rich.

That is the last wish that I should have expected to hear from you, my Virginia.

But do not you know why I wish it?—That I may show my gratitude to Mr. Hervey.

My dear child, said Mrs. Ormond, these are most generous sentiments, and worthy of you; but do not let your imagination run away with you at this rate—Mr. Hervey is rich enough.

I wish he was poor, said Virginia, that I might make him rich.

He would not love you the better, my dear, said Mrs. Ormond, if you had the wealth of the Indies. Perhaps your father may not be rich; therefore do not set your heart upon this idea.

Virginia sighed—fear succeeded to hope, and her imagination immediately reversed the bright picture that it had drawn.

But I am afraid, said she, that this gentleman is not my father—how disappointed I shall be! I wish you had never told me all this, my dear Mrs. Ormond.

I would not have told it to you, if Mr. Hervey had not desired that I should; and you may be sure he would not have desired it, unless he had good reason to believe that you would not be disappointed.

But he is not sure—he does not say he is quite sure. And even if I were quite certain of his being my father, how can I be certain that he will not disown me—he, who has deserted me so long? My grandmother, I remember, often used to say that he had no natural affection.

Your grandmother was mistaken then, for he has been searching for his child all over England, Mr. Hervey says; and he has almost lost his senses with grief, and with remorse.

Remorse!

Yes; remorse—for, having so long deserted you, he fears that you will hate him.

Hate him! Is it possible to hate a father? said Virginia.

He dreads that you should never forgive him.

Forgive him!—I have read of parents forgiving their children; but I never remember to have read of a daughter forgiving her father.—*Forgive!* You should not have used that word. I cannot *forgive* my father; but I can love him, and I will make him quite forget all his sorrows—I mean, all his sorrows about me.

After this conversation, Virginia spent her time in imagining what sort of person her father would be; whether he was like Mr. Hervey; what words he would say; where he would sit; whether he would sit beside her; and, above all, whether he would give her his blessing.

I am afraid, said she, of liking my father better than *any body else*.

No danger of that, my dear, said Mrs. Ormond smiling.

I am glad of it; for it would be very wrong and *ungrateful*, to like any thing in this world so well as Mr. Hervey.

The carriage now came to the door: Mrs. Ormond instantly ran to the window, but Virginia had not power to move—her heart beat violently.

Is he come? said she.

Yes, he is getting out of the carriage this moment!

Virginia stood with her eyes eagerly fixed upon the door—Hark! said she, laying her hand upon Mrs. Ormond's arm to prevent her from moving—Hush! that we may hear his voice.

She was breathless—no voice was to be heard—They are not coming, said she, turning as pale as death. An instant afterward her colour returned—she heard the steps of two people coming up the stairs.

His step!—Do you hear it?—Is it my father?

Virginia's imagination was worked to the highest pitch, she could scarcely sustain herself: Mrs. Ormond supported her. At this instant her father appeared.

My child!—the image of her mother! exclaimed he—stopping short—he sunk upon a chair.

My father! cried Virginia, springing forward, and throwing herself at his feet.

The voice of her mother! said Mr. Hartley—My daughter!—My long lost child!

He tried to raise her, but could not; her arms were clasped round his knee, her face rested upon it; and when he stooped to kiss her cheek, he found it cold.—She had fainted.

When she came to her senses, and found herself in her father's arms, she could scarcely believe that it was not a dream.

Your blessing!—give me your blessing, and then I shall know that you are indeed my father! cried Virginia, kneeling to him, and looking up

with an enthusiastic expression of filial piety in her countenance.

God bless you, my sweet child! said he, laying his hand upon her—and God forgive your father!

My grandmother died without giving me her blessing, said Virginia, but now I have been blessed by my father!—Happy! happy moment! O that she could look down from heaven, and see us at this instant!

Virginia was so much astonished and overpowered by this sudden discovery of a parent, and by the novelty of his first caresses, that after the first violent effervescence of her sensibility was over, she might, to an indifferent spectator, have appeared stupid and insensible. Mrs. Ormond, though far from an indifferent spectator, was by no means a penetrating judge of the human heart; she seldom saw more than the external symptoms of feeling, and she was apt to be rather impatient with her friends, if theirs did not accord with her own.

Virginia, my dear, said she in rather a reproachful tone, Mr. Hervey, you see, has left the room, on purpose to leave you at full liberty to talk to your father; and I am going—but you are so silent!

I have so much to say, and my heart is so full!—said Virginia.

Yes, I know you told me of a thousand things that you had to say to your father, before you saw him.

But now I see him, I have forgotten them all. I can think of nothing but of him.

Of him and Mr. Hervey, said Mrs. Ormond.

I was not thinking of Mr. Hervey at that moment, said Virginia blushing.

Well, my love, I will leave you to think and talk of what you please, said Mrs. Ormond, smiling significantly as she left the room.

Mr. Hartley folded his daughter in his arms with the fondest expressions of parental affection, and he was upon the point of telling her how much he approved of the choice of her heart; but he recollected his promise, and he determined to sound her inclinations further, before he even mentioned the name of Clarence Hervey.

He began, by painting the pleasures of the world, that world, from which he had hitherto been secluded.

She heard him with simple indifference: not even her curiosity was excited.

He observed, that though she had no curiosity to see, it was natural that she must have some pleasure in the thoughts of being seen.

What pleasure? said Virginia.

The pleasure of being admired and loved: beauty and grace such as yours, my child, cannot be seen without commanding admiration and love.

I do not want to be admired, replied Virginia, and I want to be loved by those only whom I love.

My dearest daughter, you shall be entirely your own mistress. I will never interfere, directly or indirectly, in the disposal of your heart.

At these last words, Virginia, who had listened to all the rest unmoved, took her father's hand, and kissed it repeatedly.

Now that I have found you, my darling child, let me at least make you happy, if I can—It is the only atonement in my power; it will be the only solace of my declining years. All that wealth can bestow——

Wealth! interrupted Virginia—Then you have wealth?

Yes, my child—may it make you happy! that is

all the enjoyment I expect from it.—It shall all be yours.

And may I do what I please with it?—O then it will indeed make me happy. I will give it all, all to Mr. Hervey. How delightful to have something to give to Mr. Hervey!

And had you never any thing to give to Mr. Hervey till now?

Never! never! he has given me every thing: Now—O joyful day!—I can prove to him that Virginia is not ungrateful!

Dear generous girl, said her father, wiping the tears from his eyes, what a daughter have I found! But tell me, my child, continued he, smiling; do you think Mr. Hervey will be content if you give him only your fortune? Do you think that he would accept the fortune without the heart?—Nay, do not turn away that dear blushing face from me: remember it is *your father* who speaks to you.

Mr. Hervey will not take your fortune without yourself, I am afraid—What shall we do? Must I refuse him your hand?

Refuse him! do you think that I could refuse him any thing, who has given me every thing?—I should be a monster indeed! There is no sacrifice I would not make, no exertion of which I am not capable, for Mr. Hervey's sake. But, my dear father, said she, changing her tone, he never asked for my hand till yesterday.

But he had won your heart long ago, I see, thought her father.

I have written an answer to his letter; will you look at it, and tell me if you approve of it?

I do approve of it, my darling child:—I will not read it—I know what it must be—he has a right to the preference he has so nobly earned.

O, he has! he has indeed, cried Virginia with an expression of strong feeling; and now is the time to show him that I am not ungrateful.

How I love you for this, my child! cried her father, fondly embracing her. This is exactly what I wished, though I did not dare to say so till I was sure of your sentiments. Mr. Hervey charged me to leave you entirely to yourself; he thought that your new situation might perhaps produce some change in your sentiments: I see he was mistaken, and I am heartily glad of it—But you are going to say something, my dear, do not let me interrupt you.

I was only going to beg that you would give this letter, my dear father, to Mr. Hervey. It is an answer to one which he wrote to me when I was poor—and *deserted*—she was near saying, but she stopped herself.

I wish, continued she, Mr. Hervey should know that my sentiments are precisely the same now that they have always been. Tell him, added she proudly, that he did me injustice, by imagining that my sentiments could alter with my situation. He little knows Virginia!

Clarence at this moment entered the room, and Mr. Hartley eagerly led his daughter to meet him.

Take her hand, cried he—you have her heart—you deserve it—and she has just been very angry with me for doubting.—But read her letter, that will speak better for her, and more to your satisfaction, no doubt, than I can.

Virginia hastily put the letter into Mr. Hervey's hand, and, breaking from her father, retired to her own apartment.

With all the trepidation of a person who feels that the happiness of his life is to be decided in a

few moments, Clarence tore open Virginia's letter ; and conscious that he was not able to command his emotion, he withdrew from her father's inquiring eyes. Mr. Hartley, however, saw nothing in this agitation, but what he thought natural to a lover, and he was delighted to perceive that his daughter had inspired so strong a passion.

Virginia's letter contained but these few lines.

' Most happy shall I be, if the whole of my future life can prove to you how deeply I feel your goodness.

' VIRGINIA ST. PIERRE.'

End of C. Hervey's Packet.

An acceptance so direct left Clarence no alternative : his fate was decided. He determined immediately to force himself to see Belinda and Mr. Vincent ; for he fancied that his mind would be more at ease when he had convinced himself, by ocular demonstration, that she was absolutely engaged to another ; that consequently, even if he were free, he could have no chance of gaining her affections. There are moments when we desire the conviction which at another time would overwhelm us with despair. It was in this temper that Mr. Hervey paid his visit to Lady Delacour ; but we have seen that he was unable to support, for many minutes, that philosophic composure to which at his first entrance into the room he had worked up his mind. The tranquillity which he had expected would be the consequence of this visit, he was further than ever from obtaining. The extravagant joy with which Lady Delacour received him, and

and indescribable something in her manner when she looked from him to Belinda, and from Belinda to Mr. Vincent, persuaded him her ladyship wished that he were in Mr. Vincent's place. The idea was so delightful that his soul was entranced, and for a few minutes Virginia, and every thing that related to her, vanished from his remembrance. It was whilst he was in this state, that Lady Delacour (as the reader may recollect) invited him into her lord's dressing-room, to tell her the contents of the packet, which had not then reached her hands. The request suddenly recalled him to his senses, but he felt that he was not at this moment able to trust himself to her ladyship's penetration: he therefore referred her to his letter for that explanation which he dreaded to make in person, and he escaped from Belinda's presence, resolving never more to expose himself to such danger.

What effect his packet produced on Lady Delacour's mind, and on Belinda's, we shall not at present stop to inquire; but having brought up Clarence Hervey's affairs to the present day, we shall continue his history.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

E O.

THOUGH Clarence Hervey was not much disposed to see either Virginia or her father, whilst he was in the state of perturbation into which he had been thrown by his interview with Belinda; yet he did not delay to send his servant

home, with a note to Mrs. Ormond, to say that he would meet Mr. Hartley whenever he pleased at his lawyer's, to make whatever arrangements might be necessary for proper settlements.

As he saw no possibility of receding with honour, he, with becoming resolution, desired to urge things forward as fast as possible, and to strengthen in his mind the sense of the *necessity* of the sacrifice that he was bound to make. His passions were naturally impetuous; but he had by persevering efforts brought them under the subjection of his reason. His power over himself was now to be put to a severe trial.

As he was going to town, he met Lord Delacour, who was riding in the Park: he was extremely intent upon his own thoughts, and was anxious to pass unnoticed. In former times, this would have been the most feasible thing imaginable; for Lord Delacour used to detest the sight of Clarence Hervey, whom he considered as the successor of Colonel Lawless in his lady's favour; but his opinion and his feelings had been entirely changed by the perusal of those letters which were perfumed with attar of roses: even that perfume had from that association become agreeable to him. He now accosted Clarence with a warmth and cordiality in his manner, that at any other moment must have pleased as much as it surprised him. But Clarence was not in a humour to enter into conversation,

You seem to be in haste, Mr. Hervey, said his lordship, observing his impatience; but, as I know your good-nature, I shall make no scruple to detain you a quarter of an hour.

As he spoke, he turned his horse, and rode with Clarence, who looked as if he wished that his lordship had been more scrupulous, and that he had not *such* a reputation for good-nature.

You will not refuse me this quarter of an hour, I am sure, continued Lord Delacour, when you hear that, by favouring me with your attention, you may, perhaps, materially serve an old—or rather a young friend of yours, and one who I once fancied was a particular favourite—I mean Miss Belinda Portman.

At the name of Belinda Portman, Clarence Hervey became all attention: he assured his lordship that he was in no haste; and all his difficulty now was, to moderate the eagerness of his curiosity.

We can take a turn or two in the Park, as well as any where, said his lordship. Nobody will overhear us; and the sooner you know what I have to say, the better.

Certainly, said Clarence.

The most malevolent person upon earth could not have tried poor Clarence's patience more than good-natured Lord Delacour contrived to do, with the best intentions possible, by his habitual circumlocution.

He descanted at length upon the difficulties, as the world goes, of meeting with a confidential friend, whom it is prudent to trust in any affair that demands delicacy, honour, and address. Men of talents were often, he observed, devoid of integrity, and men of integrity devoid of talents. When he had obtained Hervey's assent to this proposition, he next paid him sundry handsome but longwinded compliments: then he complimented himself for having just thought of Mr. Hervey as the fittest person he could apply to: then he congratulated himself upon his good luck in meeting with the very man he was just thinking of. At last, after Clarence had returned thanks for all his kindness, and had given assent to all his lordship's truisms, the substance of the business came out.

Lord Delacour informed Mr. Hervey, that he had been lately commissioned, by Lady Delacour, to discover what attractions drew a Mr. Vincent so constantly to Mrs. Luttridge's——

Here he was going to explain who Mr. Vincent was ; but Clarence assured him, that he knew perfectly well that he had been a ward of Mr. Percival's ; that he was a West Indian of large fortune, &c.

And a lover of Miss Portman's—that is the most material part of the story to *me*, continued Lord Delacour ; for otherwise, you know, Mr. Vincent would be no more to me than any other gentleman. But, in that point of view—I mean, as a lover of Belinda Portman, and I may say, not quite unlikely to be her husband, he is highly interesting to my Lady Delacour, and to me, and to you, as Miss Portman's wellwisher, doubtless.

Doubtless ! was all Mr. Hervey could reply.

Now, you must know, continued his lordship, that Lady Delacour has, for a woman, an uncommon share of penetration, and can put things together in a wonderful way : in short, it has come to her — (my Lady Delacour's) — knowledge, that, before Miss Portman was at Oakly Park last summer, and after she left it this autumn, Mr. Vincent was a constant visitor at Mrs. Luttridge's, whilst at Harrowgate, and used to play high (though unknown to the Percivals of course) at billiards, with Mr. Luttridge—a *man*, I confess, I disliked *always*, even when I carried the election for them.——But no matter : it is not from enmity I speak now. But it is very well known that Luttridge has but a small fortune, and yet lives as if he had a large one ; and all the young men who like high play are sure to be well received at his house.—Now, I hope Mr. Vincent is not well received on that footing.

Since my Lady Delacour and I have been such good friends, continued his lordship, I have dropped all connection with the Luttridges, so cannot go there myself: moreover, I do not wish to be tempted to lose any more thousands to the lady: but you never play, and you are not likely to be tempted to it now; so you will oblige me and Lady Delacour, if you will go to Luttridge's to-night; she is always charmed to see you, and you will easily discover how the land lies. Mr. Vincent is certainly a very agreeable, open-hearted young man; but, if he game, God forbid that Miss Portman should ever be his wife!

God forbid! said Clarence Hervey.

The man, resumed Lord Delacour, must, in my opinion, be very superior indeed, who is deserving of Belinda Portman. Oh! Mr. Hervey, you do not—you cannot know her merit, as I do. It is one thing, sir, to see a fine girl in a ball-room, and another—quite another—to live in the house with her for months, and to see her, as I have seen Belinda Portman, in every-day-life, as one may call it. Then it is one can judge of the real temper, manners, and character; and never woman had so sweet a temper, such charming manners, such a fair, open, generous, decided, yet gentle character as this Miss Portman.

Your lordship speaks *con amore*, said Clarence.

I speak, Mr. Hervey, from the bottom of my soul, cried Lord Delacour, pulling in his horse, and stopping short. I should be an unfeeling, ungrateful brute, if I were not sensible of the obligations—yes, the obligations—which my Lady Delacour and I have received from Belinda Portman. Why, sir, she has been the peacemaker between us—But we will not talk of that now. Let us think of her affairs. If Mr. Vincent once get into Mrs.

Luttridge's cursed set, there's no knowing where it will end. I speak from my own experience, for I really never was fond of high play; and yet, when I got into that set, I could not withstand it. I lost by hundreds and thousands; and so will he, before he is aware of it, no doubt. Mrs. Luttridge will look upon him as her dupe, and make him such. I always—but this is between ourselves—suspected that I did not lose my last thousand to her fairly. Now, Hervey, you know the whole; do try and save Mr. Vincent, for Belinda Portman's sake.

Clarence Hervey shook hands with Lord Delacour, with a sentiment of real gratitude and affection; and assured him that his confidence was not misplaced. His lordship little suspected that he had been soliciting him to save his rival; yet his confidence, as Mr. Hervey assured him, was not misplaced. Clarence's love was not of that selfish sort, which, the moment that it is deprived of hope, sinks to indifference, or is converted into hatred. Belinda could not be his; but, in the midst of the bitterest regret, he was supported by the consciousness of his own honour and generosity: he felt a noble species of delight, in the prospect of promoting the happiness of the woman upon whom his fondest affections had been fixed; and he rejoiced to feel that he had sufficient magnanimity to save a rival from ruin. He was even determined to make that rival his friend, notwithstanding the prepossession which, he clearly perceived, Mr. Vincent felt against him.

His jealousy will be extinguished the moment he knows my real situation, said Clarence to himself. He will be convinced that I have a soul incapable of envy; and, if he suspect my love for *Belinda*, he will respect the strength of mind with

which I can command my passions. I take it for granted, that Mr. Vincent must possess a heart and understanding such as I should desire in a friend, or he could never be—what he is to Belinda.

Full of these generous sentiments, Clarence waited with impatience for the hour when he might present himself at Mrs. Luttridge's. He went there so early in the evening, that he found the drawing-room quite empty; the company, who had been invited to dine, had not yet left the parlour, and the servants had but just set the card-tables, and lighted the candles. Mr. Hervey desired that nobody should be disturbed by his coming so early: and, fortunately, Mrs. Luttridge was detained some minutes by Lady Newland's lingering glass of Madeira. In the mean time Clarence executed his design. From his former observations, and from the hints that Lord Delacour had let fall, he suspected that there was sometimes in this house not only high play, but foul play: he recollected, that once, when he played there at billiards, he had perceived that the table was not perfectly horizontal; and it occurred to him that perhaps the E O table might be so contrived, as to put the fortunes of all who played at it in the power of the proprietor. Clarence had sufficient ingenuity to invent the method by which this might be done; and he had the infallible means in his possession of detecting the fraud. The E O table was in an apartment adjoining to the drawing-room: he found his way to it; and he discovered, beyond a possibility of doubt, that it was constructed for the purposes of fraud. His first impulse was, to tell this immediately to Mr. Vincent, to put him on his guard; but, upon reflection, he determined to keep his discovery to himself, till

he was satisfied whether that gentleman had, or had not, any passion for play.

If he have, thought Clarence, it is of the utmost consequence to Miss Portman, that he should early in life receive a shock, that may leave an indelible impression upon his mind. To save him a few hours of remorse, I will not give up the power of doing him the most essential service. I will let him go on—if he be so inclined—to the very verge of ruin and despair; I will let him feel all the horrors of a gamester's fate, before I tell him that I have the means to save him. Mrs. Luttridge must, when I call upon her, refund whatever he may lose: she will not brave public shame—she cannot stand a public prosecution.

Scarcely had Clarence arranged his scheme, when he heard the voices of the ladies, who were coming from the parlour.

Mrs. Luttridge made her appearance, accompanied by a very pretty modish, affected young lady, Miss Annabella Luttridge, her niece. Her little coquettish airs were lost upon Clarence Hervey, whose eye was intently fixed upon the door watching for the entrance of Mr. Vincent. He was one of the dinner party, and he came up stairs soon after the ladies. He seemed prepared for the sight of Mr. Hervey, to whom he bowed with a cold, haughty air; and then addressed himself to Miss Annabella Luttridge, who showed the most obvious desire to attract his attention.

From all that passed this evening, Mr. Hervey was led to suspect, notwithstanding the reasons which made it apparently improbable, that the fair Annabella was the secret cause of Mr. Vincent's frequent visits at her aunt's. It was natural that Clarence should be disposed to this opinion, from

the circumstances of his own situation. During three hours, that he staid at Mrs. Luttridge's, Mr. Vincent never joined any of the parties at play; but, just as he was going away, he heard some one say—'How comes it, Vincent, that you've been idle all night?' This question revived Mr. Hervey's suspicions; and, uncertain what report he should make to Lord Delacour, he resolved to defer making any, till he had further opportunities of judging.

When Mr. Hervey asked himself, how it was possible that the pupil of Mr. Percival could become a gamester, he forgot that Mr. Vincent had not been educated by his guardian; that he had lived in the West Indies till he was eighteen; and that he had only been under the care of Mr. Percival for a few years, after his habits and character were in a great measure formed. The taste for gambling he had acquired whilst he was a child; but, as it was then confined to trifles, it had been passed over as a thing of no consequence, a boyish folly, that would never grow up with him: his father used to see him, day after day, playing with eagerness, at games of chance, with his negroes, or with the sons of neighbouring planters; yet he was never alarmed; he was too intent upon making a fortune for his family, to consider how they would spend it; and he did not foresee that this boyish fault might be the means of his son's losing, in a few hours, the wealth which he had been many years amassing. When young Vincent came over to England, Mr. Percival had not immediate opportunities of discovering this particular foible in his ward; but he perceived, that in his mind there was that presumptuous belief in his special good fortune, which naturally leads to the love of gambling. Instead of lecturing him, his guardian appealed to his understanding, and took opportu-

nities of showing him the ruinous effects of high play in real life. Young Vincent was touched, and, as he thought, convinced; but his emotion was stronger than his conviction; his feelings were always more powerful than his reason. His detestation of the selfish character of a gamester was felt and expressed with enthusiasm and eloquence; and his indignation rose afterward, at the slightest hint that *he* might ever in future be tempted to become what he abhorred. Unfortunately, he disdained prudence, as the factitious virtue of inferior minds: he thought that the *feelings* of a man of honour were to be his guide, in the first and last appeal; and for his conduct through life, as a man and as a gentleman, he proudly professed to trust to the sublime instinct of a good heart. His guardian's doubts of the infallibility, and even of the existence, of this moral instinct, wounded Mr. Vincent's pride, instead of alarming his understanding; and he was rather eager, than averse, to expose himself to the danger, that he might prove his superiority to the temptation.—How different are the feelings in different sensations! Yet, often as this has been repeated, how difficult it is to impress the truth upon inexperienced, sanguine minds!—Whilst young Vincent was immediately under his guardian's eye at Oakly Park, his safety from vice appeared to him inglorious; he was impatient to sally forth into the world, confident rather of his innate than acquired virtue.

When he first became acquainted with Mrs. Luttridge at Harrowgate, he knew that she was a professed gambler, and he despised the character; yet, without reflecting on the danger, or perhaps for the pleasure of convincing Mr. Percival that he was superior to it, he continued his visits. For some time he was a passive spectator. Billiards

however was a game of address, not chance; there was a billiard-table at Oakly Park, as well as at Mr. Luttridge's, and he had played with his guardian. Why then should he not play with Mr. Luttridge? He did play: his skill was admired; he betted, and his bets were successful: but he did not call this gaming, for the bets were not to any great amount, and it was only playing at billiards. Mr. Percival was delayed in town some weeks longer than usual, and he knew nothing of the manner in which his young friend spent his time. As soon as Mr. Vincent heard of his arrival at Oakly Park, he left half finished his game at billiards; and, fortunately for him, the charms of Belinda made him forget for some months that such a thing as a billiard-table existed. All that had happened at Mr. Luttridge's passed from his mind as a dream; and whilst his heart was agitated by his new passion, he could scarcely believe that he had ever been interested by any other feelings. He was surprised, when he accidentally recollected the eagerness with which he used to *amuse* himself in Mr. Luttridge's company; but he was certain that all this was past for ever; and precisely because he was under the dominion of one strong passion, he thought he could never be under the dominion of another. Thus persisting in his disdain of reason as a moral guide, Mr. Vincent thought, acted, and suffered as a man of feeling. Scarcely had Belinda left Oakly Park for one week, when the *ennui* consequent to violent passion became insupportable; and to console himself for her absence, he flew to the billiard-table. Emotion of some kind or other was become necessary to him; he said that not to feel, was not to live; and soon the suspense, the anxiety, the hopes, the fears, the perpetual vicissitudes of a gamester's life appeared to him almost as delight-

ful as those of a lover's. Deceived by these appearances, Mrs. Luttridge thought that his affection for Belinda either was or might be conquered, and her hopes of obtaining his fortune for her niece Annabella revived. As Mr. Vincent could not endure Mrs. Freke, she abstained, at her friend's particular desire, from appearing at her house whilst he was there, and Mrs. Luttridge interested him much in her own favour, by representing her indignation at *Harriet's* conduct to be such, that it had occasioned a total breach in their friendship. Mrs. Freke's sudden departure from Harrowgate confirmed the probability of this quarrel; yet these two ladies were secretly leagued together in a design of breaking off Mr. Vincent's match with Belinda, against whom Mrs. Freke had vowed revenge. The anonymous letter, which she hoped would work her purpose, produced, however, an effect totally unexpected upon his generous mind—he did not guess the writer; but his indignation against such base accusations burst forth with a violence that astounded Mrs. Luttridge: his love for Belinda appeared ten times more enthusiastic than before—the moment she was accused, he felt himself her defender, as well as her lover. He was dispossessed of the evil spirit of gambling as if by a miracle: and the billiard-table, and Mrs. Luttridge, and Miss Annabella, vanished from his view. He breathed nothing but love; he would ask no permission; he would wait for none from Belinda; he declared that instant he would set out in search of her, and he would tear that infamous letter to atoms in her presence; he would show her how impossible suspicion was to his nature. The first violence of the hurricane Mrs. Luttridge could not stand, and thought not of opposing; but whilst *his* horses and curricles were getting ready, she

took such an affectionate leave of his dog Juba, and she protested so much that she and Annabella should not know how to live without poor Juba, that Mr. Vincent, who was excessively fond of his dog, could not help sympathizing in their sorrow; reasoning just as well as they wished, he extended his belief in their affection for this animal to friendship, if not love, for his master. He could not grant Mrs. Luttridge's earnest supplication to leave the dog behind him, under her protection; but he promised—and laid his hand upon his heart when he promised—that Juba should wait upon Mrs. Luttridge as soon as she went to town. This appointment being made, Miss Annabella permitted herself to be somewhat consoled. It would be injustice to omit, that she did all that could be done by a cambric handkerchief, to evince delicate sensibility in this parting scene. Mrs. Luttridge also deserves her share of praise, for the manner in which she reproved her niece for giving way to her feelings, and for the address with which she wished to heaven that poor Annabella had the calm, philosophic temper of which Miss Portman was, she understood, a most uncommon example.

As Mr. Vincent drove toward London, he reflected upon these last words; and he could not help thinking, that if Belinda had more faults she would be more amiable.

These thoughts were, however, driven from his mind, and scarcely left a trace behind them, when he once more saw and conversed with her. The dignity, sincerity, and kindness, which she showed the evening that he put the anonymous letter into her hands, charmed and touched him; and his real feelings and his enthusiasm conspired to make him believe that his whole happiness depended on her

smiles. The confession which she made to him of her former attachment to Clarence Hervey, as it raised in Vincent's mind strong emotions of jealousy, increased his passion as much as it piqued his pride, and she appeared in a new and highly interesting light, when he discovered that the coldness of manner, which he had attributed to want of sensibility, arose probably from its excess—that her heart should have been pre-occupied, was more tolerable to him than the belief of her settled indifference. He was so intent upon these delightful varieties in his love for Belinda, that it was not till he had received a reproachful note from Mrs. Luttridge, to remind him of his promised visit from Juba, that he could prevail upon himself to leave Twickenham even for a few hours. Lady Delacour's hatred or fear of Juba, which he accidentally mentioned to Miss Annabella, appeared to her and to her aunt 'the most extraordinary thing upon earth;' and when it was contrasted with their excessive fondness, it seemed to him indeed unaccountable. From pure consideration for her ladyship's nerves, Mrs. Luttridge petitioned Vincent to leave the dog with her, that Helena might not be in such imminent danger from 'the animal's monstrous jaws.' The petition was granted; and, as the petitioners foresaw, Juba became to them a most useful auxiliary. Juba's master called daily to see him, and sometimes when he came in the morning Mrs. Luttridge was not at home, so that his visits were repeated in the evening, and the evening in London is what, in other places, is called the night.—Mrs. Luttridge's nights could not be passed without deep play. The sight of the E O table at first shocked Mr. Vincent: he thought of Mr. Percival, and he turned away from it: but to his active social disposition it was extremely irksome to stand idle and uninterested, where all

were busy and eager in one common pursuit; to his generous temper it seemed ungentlemanlike to stand by, the silent censor of the rest of the company; and when he considered of how little importance a few hundreds, or even thousands, could be to a man of his large fortune, he *could not help feeling*, that it was sordid, selfish, avaricious, to dread their possible loss; and thus social spirit, courage, generosity, all conspired to carry our man of feeling to the gaming-table. Once there, his ruin was inevitable. Mrs. Luttridge, whilst she held his doom in her power, hesitated only whether it would be more her interest to marry him to her niece, or to content herself with his fortune. His passion for Belinda, which she saw had been by some means or other increased, in spite of the anonymous letter, gave her little hopes of Annabella's succeeding, even with the assistance of Juba, and delicate sensibility. So the aunt, careless of her niece's disappointment, determined that Mr. Vincent should be *her* victim; and sensible that she must not give him time for reflection, she hurried him on, till in the course of a few evenings spent at the E O table, he lost, not only thousands, but tens of thousands. — One lucky night, she assured him, would set all to rights; the run could not always be against him, and Fortune must change in his favour, if he tried her with sufficient perseverance.

The horror, the agony of mind which he endured at this sudden ruin, which seemed impending over him, the recollection of Belinda, of Mr. Percival, almost drove him to distraction—He retreated from the E O table one night, swearing that he never would hazard another guinea. But his ruin was not yet complete—he had thousands yet to lose, and Mrs. Luttridge would not thus relinquish her prey. She persuaded him to try his fortune *once*

more. She now suffered him to regain courage, by winning back some of his own fortune. His mind was relieved from the sense of immediate danger; he rejoiced to be saved from the humiliation of confessing his losses to Mr. Percival and Belinda. The next day he saw her with unusual pleasure, and this was the very morning when Clarence Hervey paid his visit. The imprudence of Lady Delacour, joined perhaps to his own consciousness that he had a secret fault, which ought to lower him in the esteem of his mistress, made him misinterpret every thing that passed—his jealousy was excited in the most sudden and violent manner. He flew from Lady Delacour's to Mrs. Luttridge's—he was soothed and flattered by the apparent kindness with which he was received by Annabella and her aunt; but after dinner, when one of the servants whispered to Mrs. Luttridge, who sat next to him, that Mr. Clarence Hervey was above stairs, he gave such a start, that part of the bumper of wine, which he was going to drink to her health, did not escape the fair Annabella's lap. In the confusion and apologies which this accident occasioned, Mrs. Luttridge had time to consider what might be the cause of the start, and she combined her suspicions so quickly and so judiciously, that she guessed the truth—that he feared to be seen at the E O table by a person who might find it for his interest to tell the truth to Belinda Portman. Mr. Vincent, said she, in a low voice, I have such a terrible head-ache that I am fit for nothing—I am not *up to E O* to-night, so you must wait for your revenge till to-morrow.

Mr. Vincent was heartily glad to be relieved from his engagement, and he endeavoured to escape Clarence's suspicions, by devoting his whole time *this evening* to Annabella, not in the least appre-

hensive that Mr. Hervey would return the next night. Mr. Vincent was at the E O table at the usual hour, for he was excessively anxious to regain what he had lost, not so much for the sake of the money, which he could afford to lose, but lest the defalcation in his fortune should lead Mr. Percival to the knowledge of the means which had occasioned it. He could not endure, after his high vaunts, to see himself humbled by his rash confidence in himself, and he secretly vowed, that if he could but reinstate himself, by one night's good luck, he would for ever quit the society of gamblers. A few months before this time, he would have scorned the idea of concealing any part of his conduct, any one of his actions, from his best friend Mr. Percival; but his pride now reconciled him to the meanness of concealment; and here, the acuteness of his feelings was to his own mind an excuse for dissimulation; so fallacious is moral instinct unenlightened or uncontrolled by reason or religion,

Mr. Vincent was disappointed in his hopes of regaining what he had lost. This was not the fortunate night, which Mrs. Luttridge's prognostics had vainly taught him to expect: he played on, however, with all the impetuosity of his natural temper; his judgement forsook him; he scarcely knew what he said or did; and, in the course of a few hours, he was worked up to such a pitch of insanity, that, in one desperate moment, he betted nearly all that he was worth in the world—and lost!—He stood like one stupefied—the hum of voices scarcely reached his ear—he saw figures moving before him, but he did not distinguish who or what they were.

Supper was announced, and the room emptied fast, whilst he remained motionless, leaning on the E O table. He was roused by Mrs. Luttridge's saying, as she passed—Don't you sup to-night, Mr.

Hervey?—Vincent looked up, and saw Clarence Hervey opposite to him. His countenance instantly changed, and the lightning of anger flashed through the gloom of despair: he uttered not a syllable; but his looks said—How is this, sir? Here again to-night, to watch me?—to enjoy my ruin?—to be ready to carry the first news of it to Belinda?

At this last thought, Vincent struck his closed hand with violence against his forehead; and rushing by Mr. Hervey, who in vain attempted to speak to him, he pressed into the midst of the crowd on the stairs, and let himself be carried along with them into the supper-room. At supper he took his usual seat between Mrs. Luttridge and the fair Annabella; and, as if determined to brave the observing eyes of Clarence Hervey, who was at the same table, he affected extravagant gaiety; he ate, drank, talked, and laughed, more than any of the company. Toward the end of the supper, his dog, who was an inmate at Mrs. Luttridge's, licked his hand, to put him in mind that he had given him nothing to eat.

Drink, Juba!—drink, and never have done, boy!—cried Vincent, holding a bumper of wine to the dog's mouth: he's the only dog I ever saw taste wine. Then snatching up some of the flowers which ornamented the table, he swore that Juba should henceforward be called Anacreon, and that he deserved to be crowned with roses by the hand of Beauty. The fair Annabella instantly took a hot-house rose from her bosom, and assisted in making the garland with which she crowned the new Anacreon. Insensible to his honours, the dog, who was extremely hungry, turned suddenly to Mrs. Luttridge, by whom he had, till this night, regularly been fed with the choicest morsels; and, *lifting up his huge paw, laid it, as he had been wont*

to do, upon her arm. She took it off: he, knowing nothing of the change in his master's affairs, laid the paw again upon her arm; and, with that familiarity to which he had long been encouraged, raised his head almost close to the lady's cheek.

Down, Juba!—down, sir, down! cried Mrs. Luttridge in a sharp voice.

Down, Juba!—down, sir! repeated Mr. Vincent in a tone of bitter feeling, all his assumed gaiety forsaking him at this instant. Down, Juba!—down, sir—down!—as low as your master! thought he; and, pushing back his chair, he rose from table, and precipitately left the room.

Little notice was taken of his retreat; the chairs closed in; and the gap, which his vacant place left, was visible but for a moment: the company were as gay as before; the fair Annabella smiled with a grace as attractive; and Mrs. Luttridge exulted in the success of her schemes—whilst her victim was in the agonies of despair.

Clarence Hervey, who had watched every change of Vincent's countenance, saw the agony of soul with which he rose from the table, and quitted the room: he suspected his purpose, and followed him immediately. But Mr. Vincent had got out of the house before he could overtake him:—which way he was gone, no one could tell, for no one had seen him: the only information he could gain was, that he might possibly be heard of at Nerot's Hotel, or at Governor Montford's, in Portland Place. The hotel was but a few yards from Mrs. Luttridge's. Clarence went there directly. He asked for Mr. Vincent. One of the waiters said, that he was not yet come in; but another called out—Mr. Vincent, sir, did you say? I have just shown him up to his room.

Which is his room?—I must see him instantly, cried Hervey.

Not to-night—you can't see him now, sir. Mr. Vincent won't let you in, I can assure you, sir. I went up myself, three minutes ago, with some letters, that came whilst he was away, but he would not let me in. I heard him double-lock the door, and he swore terribly. I can't go up again at this time o' night—for my life I dare not, sir.

Where is his own man?—Has Mr. Vincent any servant here?—Mr. Vincent's man! cried Clarence; let me see him!

You can't, sir. Mr. Vincent has just sent his black, the only servant he has here, out on some message.—Indeed, sir, there's no use in going up, continued the waiter, as Clarence sprang up two or three stairs at once: Mr. Vincent has desired nobody may disturb him. I give you my word, sir, he'll be very angry; and, besides, 'twould be to no purpose, for he'll not unlock the door.

Is there but one door to the room? said Mr. Hervey; and, as he asked the question, he pulled a guinea out of his pocket, and touched the waiter's hand with it.

Oh—now I recollect—yes, sir, there's a private door through a closet—may be, that mayn't be fastened.

Clarence put the guinea into the waiter's hand, who instantly showed him the way up the back staircase to the door that opened into Mr. Vincent's bedchamber.

Leave me now, whispered he, and make no noise.

The man withdrew; and as Mr. Hervey went close to the concealed door, to try if it was fastened, he distinctly heard a pistol cocked. The door was

not fastened: he pushed it softly open, and saw this unfortunate man upon his knees, the pistol in his hand, his eyes looking up to heaven. Clarence was in one moment behind him; and, seizing hold of the pistol, he snatched it from Vincent's grasp with so much calm presence of mind and dexterity, that, although the pistol was cocked, it did not go off.

Mr. Hervey! exclaimed Vincent, starting up. Astonishment overpowered all other sensations. But the next instant recovering the power of speech, Is this the conduct of a gentleman, Mr. Hervey?—of a man of honour! cried he, thus to intrude upon my privacy; to be a spy upon my actions; to triumph in my ruin; to witness my despair; to rob me of the only——

He looked wildly at the pistol, which Clarence held in his hand; then snatching up another which lay upon the table, he continued—You are my enemy—I know it—you are my rival—I know it—Belinda loves you—Nay, affect not to start—this is no time for dissimulation—Belinda loves you—you know it—for her sake, for your own, put me out of the world—put me out of torture. It shall not be called murder; it shall be called a duel. You have been a spy upon my actions—I demand satisfaction. If you have one spark of honour or of courage within you, Mr. Hervey, show it now—fight me, sir, openly as man to man, rival to rival, enemy to enemy—fire!

If you fire upon me you will repent it, replied Clarence calmly, for I am not your enemy; I am not your rival.

You are, interrupted Vincent, raising his voice to the highest pitch of indignation; you are my rival, though you dare not avow it; the denial is base, false, unmanly.—O, Belinda, is this the being

you prefer to *me*? Gamester!—wretch as I am, my soul never stooped to falsehood; treachery I abhor; courage, honour, and a heart worthy of Belinda, I possess.—I beseech you, sir, continued he, addressing himself in a tremulous tone of contempt to Mr. Hervey—I beseech you, sir, to leave me to my own feelings—and to myself.

You are not yourself at this moment, and I cannot leave you to such mistaken feelings, replied Hervey; command yourself for a moment, and hear me: use your reason, and you will soon be convinced that I am your friend,

My friend!

Your friend—For what purpose did I come here, to snatch this pistol from your hand? If it were my interest, my wish, that you were out of the world, why did I prevent you from destroying yourself? Do you think *that* the action of an enemy? Use your reason.

I cannot, said Vincent, striking his forehead; I know not what to think;—I am not master of myself—I conjure you, sir, for your own sake, to leave me.

For my *own* sake! repeated Hervey disdainfully; I am not thinking of myself; nor can any thing you have said provoke me from my purpose. My purpose is to save you from ruin, for the sake of a woman, whom, though I am no longer your rival, I have loved longer, if not better, than you have.

There was something so open in Hervey's countenance; such a strong expression of truth in his manner, that it could not be resisted, and Vincent, in an altered voice, exclaimed:

You acknowledge that you have loved Belinda—and could you cease to love her? Impossible!—And, loving her, must you not detest me?

No, said Clarence, holding out his hand to him;

I wish to be your friend; I have not the baseness to wish to deprive others of happiness, because I cannot enjoy it myself. In one word, to put you at ease with me for ever, I have no pretensions, I can have none, to Miss Portman. I am engaged to another woman—in a few days you will hear of my marriage.

Mr. Vincent threw the pistol from him, and gave his hand to Hervey.

Pardon what I said to you just now, cried he; I knew not what I said—I spoke in the agony of despair—your purpose is most generous—but it is in vain—you came too late—I am ruined, past all hope.

He folded his arms, and his eyes reverted involuntarily to his pistols.

The misery that you have this night experienced, said Mr. Hervey, was necessary to the security of your future happiness.

Happiness! repeated Vincent—happiness—there is no happiness left for me. My doom is fixed—fixed by my own folly—my own rash, headstrong folly. Madman that I was, what could tempt me to the gaming-table? O! if I could recall but a few days, a few hours of my existence!—But remorse is vain; prudence comes too late. Do you know, said he, fixing his eyes upon Hervey, do you know, that I am a beggar? that I have not a farthing left upon earth? Go to Belinda; tell her so: tell her, that if she had ever the slightest regard for me, I deserve it no longer. Tell her to forget, despise, detest me. Give her joy, that she has escaped having a gamester for a husband.

I will, said Clarence, I will, if you please, tell her what I believe to be true,—that the agony you have felt this night, the dear-bought experience you have had, will be for ever a warning.

A warning! interrupted Vincent—O, that it could yet be useful to me!—But I tell you, it comes too late—Nothing can save me.

I can, said Mr. Hervey. Swear to me, for Belinda's sake—solemnly swear to me, that you will never more trust your happiness and hers to the hazard of a die—swear that you will never more, directly or indirectly, play at any game of chance, and I will restore to you the fortune, the happiness that you have lost.

Mr. Vincent stood, as if suspended between ecstasy and despair; he dared not trust his senses: with a fervent and solemn adjuration he made the vow that was required of him; and Clarence then revealed to him the secret of the E O table.

When Mrs. Luttridge knows that I have it in my power to expose her to public shame, she will instantly refund all that she has iniquitously won from you. Even among gamblers, she would be blasted for ever by this discovery: she knows it; and if she dared to brave public opinion, we have then a sure resource in the law—prosecute her. The laws of honour, as well as the laws of the land, will support the prosecution. But she will never let the affair go into a court of justice. I will see her early, as early as I can to-morrow, and put you out of suspense.

Most generous of human beings! exclaimed Vincent: I cannot express to you what I feel; but your own heart, your own approbation—

Farewell, good night, interrupted Clarence; I see that I have made a friend; I was determined that Belinda's husband should be my friend—I have succeeded beyond my hopes. And now I will *intrude* no longer, said he, as he closed the door after him. His sensations at this instant were more delightful even than those of the man he had relieved

from the depth of despair. How wisely has Providence made the benevolent and generous passions the most pleasurable!

CHAPTER XXI.

A JEW.

In the silence of the night, when the hurry of action was over, and the enthusiasm of generosity began to subside, the words which had escaped from Mr. Vincent in the paroxysm of despair and rage—the words *Belinda loves you*—recurred to Clarence Hervey; and it required all his power over himself to banish the sound from his ear, and the idea from his mind. He endeavoured to persuade himself that these words were dictated merely by sudden jealousy; and that there could be no real foundation for the assertion: perhaps this belief was a necessary support to his integrity. He reflected, that, at all events, his engagement with Virginia could not be violated; his proffered services to Mr. Vincent could not be withdrawn: he was firm and consistent. Before two o'clock the next day, Vincent received from Clarence this short note:

‘Inclosed is Mrs. Luttridge’s acknowledgement, that she has no claims upon you in consequence of what passed last night. I said nothing about the money she had previously won, as I understand you have paid it.

‘The lady fell into fits; but it would not do. The husband attempted to bully me. I told him I

should be at his service, after he had made the whole affair public, by calling you out.

‘I would have seen you myself this morning, but that I am engaged with lawyers and marriage settlements.

‘Yours sincerely,
‘CLARENCE HERVEY.’

Overjoyed at the sight of Mrs. Luttridge's acknowledgement, Vincent repeated his vow, never more to hazard himself in her dangerous society. He was impatient to see Belinda; and full of generous and grateful sentiments, in this first moment of joy, he determined to conceal nothing from her; to make at once the confession of his own imprudence, and the eulogium of Clarence Hervey's generosity. He was just setting out for Twickenham, when he was sent for by his uncle, Governor Montford, who had business to settle with him relative to his West India estates. He spent the remainder of the morning with his uncle; and there he received a charming letter from Belinda;—that letter which she had written and sent whilst Lady Delacour was reading Clarence Hervey's packet. It would have cured Vincent of jealousy, even if he had not, in the interim, seen Mr. Hervey, and learnt from him the news of his approaching marriage. Miss Portman, at the conclusion of her letter, informed him that Lady Delacour purposed being in Berkeley Square the next day; that they were to spend a week in town, on account of Mrs. Margaret Delacour, who had promised her ladyship a visit: and to go to Twickenham would be a formidable journey to an infirm old lady who seldom stirred out of her house.

Whatever displeasure Lady Delacour felt to-

wards her friend Belinda, on account of her coldness to Mr. Hervey and her steadiness to Mr. Vincent, had by this time subsided. Angry people, who express their passion, as it has been justly said, always speak worse than they think. This was usually the case with her ladyship.

The morning after they arrived in town, she came into Belinda's room with an air of more than usual sprightliness and satisfaction.—Great news!—Great news!—Extraordinary news—But it is very imprudent to excite your expectations, my dear Belinda. Pray, did you hear a wonderful noise in the square a little while ago?

Yes; I thought I heard a great bustle; but Marriott appeased my curiosity by saying that it was only a battle between two dogs.

It is well if this battle between two dogs do not end in a duel between two men, said Lady Delacour.

This prospect of mischief seems to have put your ladyship in wonderfully good spirits, said Belinda smiling. But what have you heard of Mr. Vincent?

That Miss Annabella Luttridge is dying for love of him—or of his fortune. Knowing, as I do, the vanity of mankind, I suppose that your Mr. Vincent, all perfect as he is, was flattered by the little coquette; and perhaps he condescends to repay her in the same coin. I take it for granted—for I always fill up the gaps in a story my own way—I take it for granted, that Mr. Vincent got into some entanglement with her; and that this has been the cause of the quarrel with the aunt. That there has been a quarrel is certain: for your friend Juba told Marriott so. His massa swore that he would never go to Mrs. Luttridge's again; and this morning he took the decisive measure of sending to request that

his dog might be returned. Juba went for his namesake. Miss Annabella Luttridge was the person who delivered up the dog; and she desired the black to tell his master, with her compliments, that Juba's collar was rather too tight; and she begged that he would not fail to take it off as soon as he could. Perhaps, my dear, you are as simple as the poor negro, and suspect no *finesse* in this message. Miss Luttridge, aware that the faithful fellow was too much in your interests, to be either persuaded or bribed to carry a billet-doux from any other lady to his master, did not dare to trust him upon this occasion; but she had the art to make him carry her letter without his knowing it. *Colin maillard*, vulgarly called *blind man's buff*, was, some time ago, a favourite play amongst the Parisian ladies: now, *hide and seek* will be brought into fashion, I suppose, by the fair Annabella. Judge of her talents for the game by this instance: she hid her *billet-doux* within the lining of Juba's collar. The dog, unconscious of his dignity as an ambassador, or rather as a *chargé d'affaires*, set out on his way home. As he was crossing Berkeley Square, he was met by Sir Philip Baddely and his dog. The baronet's insolent favourite bit the black's heels. Juba the dog resented the injury immediately, and a furious combat ensued. In the height of the battle Juba's collar fell off. Sir Philip Baddely espied the paper that was sewed to the lining, and seized upon it immediately: the negro caught hold of it at the same instant: the baronet swore; the black struggled: the baronet knocked him down. The great dog left his canine antagonist that moment, flew at your baronet, and would have eaten him up at three mouthfuls, if Sir Philip had not made good his retreat to Dangerfield's circulating library. The negro's head was terribly cut

by the sharp point of a stone, and his ancle was sprained; but, as he has just told me, he did not feel this till afterward. He started up, and pursued his master's enemy. Sir Philip was actually reading Miss Luttridge's *billet-doux* aloud when the black entered the library. He reclaimed his master's property with great intrepidity; and a gentleman, who was present, took his part immediately.

In the mean time, Lord Delacour, who had been looking at the battle from our breakfast-room window, declared he would go over to Dangerfield's, to see what was the matter, and how all this would end. He entered the library just as the gentleman, who had volunteered in favour of poor Juba, was disputing with Sir Philip. The bleeding negro told my lord, in as plain words as he could, the cause of the dispute; and Lord Delacour, who, to do him justice, is a man of honour, joined instantly in his defence. The baronet thought proper, at length, to submit; and he left the field of battle, without having any thing to say for himself, but—'D—me! very extraordinary, d—me!'—*or words to that effect.*

Now, Lord Delacour, beside being a man of honour, is also a man of humanity. I know that I cannot oblige you more, my dear Belinda, than by seasoning my discourse with a little conjugal flattery. My lord was concerned to see the poor black writhing in pain; and, with the assistance of the gentleman who had joined in his defence, he brought Juba across the square to our house. Guess for what?—to try upon the sprained ancle an infallible quack balsam recommended to him by the dowager Lady Boucher. I was in the hall when they brought the poor fellow in. Marriott was called. Mrs. Marriott, cried my lord, pray let us

have Lady Boucher's infallible balsam this instant ! Had you but seen the eagerness of face, or heard the emphasis, with which he said '*infallible balsam*'—you must let me laugh at the recollection. One human smile must pass, and be forgiven.

The smile may be the more readily forgiven, said Belinda, since I am sure you are conscious that it reflected almost as much upon yourself as upon Lord Delacour.

Why, yes: belief in a quack doctor is full as bad as belief in a quack balsam, I allow. Your observation is so malicious, because so just, that, to punish you for it, I will not tell you the remainder of my story for a week to come; and I assure you that the best part of it I have left untold. To return to our friend Mr. Vincent:—Could you but know what reasons I have, at this instant, for wishing him in Jamaica, you would acknowledge that I am truly candid in confessing that I believe my suspicions about E O were unfounded; and I am truly generous in admitting, that you are right to treat him with justice.

This last enigmatical sentence Belinda could not prevail upon Lady Delacour to explain.

In the evening Mr. Vincent made his appearance. Lady Delacour immediately attacked him with raillery, on the subject of the fair Annabella. He was rejoiced to perceive that her suspicions took this turn; and that nothing relative to the transaction, in which Clarence Hervey had been engaged, had transpired. Vincent wavered in his resolution to confess the truth to Belinda. Though he had determined upon this in the first moment of joyful enthusiasm, yet the delay of four-and-twenty hours had made a material change in his feelings; his most virtuous resolves were always rather the effect of sudden impulse, than of steady principle. But

when the tide of passion had swept away the landmarks, he had no method of ascertaining the boundaries of right and wrong. Upon the present occasion, his love for Belinda confounded all his moral calculations: one moment, his feelings as a man of honour forbade him to condescend to the meanness of dissimulation; but the next instant his feelings as a lover prevailed; and he satisfied his conscience by the idea, that, as his vow must preclude all danger of his return to the gaming-table in future, it would be only creating an unnecessary alarm in Belinda's mind, to speak to her of his past imprudence. His generosity at first revolted from the thought of suppressing those praises of Clarence Hervey which had been so well deserved; but his jealousy returned to combat his first virtuous impulse. He considered, that his own inferiority must by comparison appear more striking to his mistress; and he sophistically persuaded himself, that it would be for her happiness to conceal the merits of a rival, to whom she could never be united. In this vacillating state of mind he continued during the greatest part of the evening. About half an hour before he took his leave, Lady Delacour was called out of the room by Mrs. Marriott. Left alone with Belinda, his embarrassment increased, and the unsuspecting kindness of her manner was to him the most bitter reproach. He stood in a silent agony, whilst in a playful tone she smiled and said,

Where are your thoughts, Mr. Vincent? If I were of a jealous temper, I should say With the fair Annabella——

You would say wrong then, replied Mr. Vincent in a constrained voice. He was upon the point of telling the truth; but to gain a reprieve.

of a few minutes, he entered into a defence of his conduct towards Miss Luttridge.

The sudden return of Lady Delacour relieved him from his embarrassment, and they conversed only on general subjects during the remainder of the evening: and he at last departed, secretly rejoicing that he was, as he fancied, under the necessity of postponing his explanation; he even thought of suppressing the history of his transactions with Mrs. Luttridge. His former nice sense of honour had been considerably deadened at the gaming-table; and he could *now* stoop to that dissimulation at which he would have shuddered but a few months before. He knew that his secret was safe with Clarence Hervey: Mrs. Luttridge would be silent, for her own sake; and neither Lady Delacour nor Belinda had any connexion with her society.

A few days afterward, Mr. Vincent went to Gray, the jeweller, for some trinkets which he had bespoke. Lord Delacour was there, speaking about the diamond ring which Gray had promised to dispose of for him. Whilst his lordship and Mr. Vincent were busy about their own affairs, Sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort came into the shop. Sir Philip and Mr. Vincent had never before met. Lord Delacour, to prevent him from getting into a quarrel about a lady who was so little worth fighting for as Miss Annabella Luttridge, had positively refused to tell Mr. Vincent what he knew of the affair, or to let him know the name of the gentleman who was concerned in it.

The shopman addressed Mr. Vincent by his name; and immediately Sir Philip whispered to Rochfort, that Mr. Vincent was '*the master of the black*.' Vincent, who unluckily overheard him, in-

stantly asked Lord Delacour, if that was the gentleman who had behaved so ill to his servant? Lord Delacour told him that it was now of no consequence to inquire, and that he hoped he was too prudent, on the very eve of his marriage to go in quest of a quarrel. If, said his lordship, any of these gentlemen choose to accost you, I shall think you do rightly to retort; but for heaven's sake do not begin the attack!

Vincent's impetuosity was not to be restrained; he demanded from Sir Philip, whether he was the person who had beaten his servant? Sir Philip readily obliged him with an answer in the affirmative; and the consequence was, the loss of a finger to the baronet, and a wound in the side to Mr. Vincent, which, though it did not endanger his life, yet confined him to his room for several days. The impatience of his mind increased his fever, and retarded his recovery.

When Belinda's first alarm for Mr. Vincent's safety was over, she anxiously questioned Lord Delacour as to the particulars of all that had passed between Mr. Vincent and Sir Philip, that she might judge of the manner in which her lover had conducted himself. Lord Delacour, who was a man of strict truth, was compelled to confess that Mr. Vincent had shown more spirit than temper, and more courage than prudence. Lady Delacour rejoiced to perceive that this account made Belinda uncommonly serious.

Mr. Vincent now thought himself sufficiently recovered to leave his room: his physicians, indeed, would have kept him prisoner a few days longer, but he was too impatient of restraint, to listen to their counsels.

'Juba, tell the doctor, when he comes, that you

could not keep me at home; and that is all that is necessary to be said.'

He had now summoned courage to acknowledge to Belinda all that had happened, and was proceeding without difficulty down stairs, when he was suddenly struck by the sound of a voice which he little expected at this moment; a voice he had formerly been accustomed to hear with pleasure, but now it smote him to the heart:—it was the voice of Mr. Percival. For the first time in his life, he wished to deny himself to his friend. The recollection of the E O table, of Mr. Luttridge, of Mr. Percival as his guardian, and of all the advice he had heard from him as his friend, rushed upon his mind at this instant: conscious and ashamed, he shrunk back, precipitately returned to his own room, and threw himself into a chair, breathless with agitation. He listened, expecting to hear Mr. Percival coming up stairs, and endeavoured to compose himself, that he might not betray, by his own agitation, all that he wished most anxiously to conceal. After waiting for some time, he rang the bell, to make inquiries. The waiter told him that a Mr. Percival had asked for him; but, having been told by his black that he was just gone out, the gentleman being, as he said, much hurried, had left a note; for an answer to which he would call at eight o'clock in the evening. Vincent was glad of this short reprieve. Alas! thought he, how changed am I, when I fear to meet my best friend! to what has this one fatal propensity reduced me!

He was little aware of the new difficulties that awaited him.

Mr. Percival's note was as follows:

'My dear friend!

'Am not I a happy man, to find a friend in my ti-devant ward? But I have no time for sentiment; nor does it become the character in which I am now writing to you—that of a DUN.—You are so rich, and so prudent, that the word in capital letters cannot frighten you. Lady Anne's cousin, poor Mr. Carrysfort, is dead. I am guardian to his boys; they are but ill provided for. I have fortunately obtained a partnership in a good house for the second son. *Ten* thousand pounds are wanting to establish him—we cannot raise the money amongst us, without dunning poor Mr. Vincent. Inclosed is your bond for the purchase-money of the little estate you bought from me last summer. I know that you have double the sum we want in ready money—so I make no ceremony. Let me have the *ten* thousand this evening, if you can, as I wish to leave town as soon as possible.

'Yours most sincerely,

'HENRY PERCIVAL.'

Now, Mr. Vincent had lost, and had actually paid to Mrs. Luttridge, the ready money which had been destined to discharge his debt to Mr. Percival: he expected fresh remittances from the West Indies in the course of a few weeks; but in the mean time he must raise this money immediately: this he could only do by having recourse to Jews—a desperate expedient. The Jew, to whom he applied, no sooner discovered that Mr. Vincent was under a necessity of having this sum before eight o'clock in the evening, than he became exorbitant in his demands; and the more impatient this unfortunate young man became, the more difficulties he raised. At last, a bargain was

concluded between them, in which Vincent knew that he was grossly imposed upon; but to this he submitted, for he had no alternative. The Jew promised to bring him ten thousand pounds at five o'clock in the evening, but it was half after seven before he made his appearance; and then, he was so dilatory and circumspect in reading over and signing the bonds, and in completing the formalities of the transaction, that before the money was actually in Vincent's possession, one of the waiters of the hotel knocked at the door, to let him know that Mr. Percival was coming up stairs. Vincent hurried the Jew into an adjoining apartment, and bid him wait there till he should come to finish the business. Though totally unsuspecting, Mr. Percival could not help being struck with the perturbation in which he found his young friend. Vincent immediately began to talk of the duel, which had delayed his marriage, and his friend was led to conclude, that his anxiety arose from this affair. He endeavoured to put him at ease, by changing the conversation. He spoke of the business which brought him to town, and of the young man whom he was going to place with a banker.

I hope, said he, observing that Vincent grew more embarrassed, that my *dunning* you for this money is not really inconvenient?

Not in the least—not in the least. I have the money ready—in a few moments—if you'll be so good as to wait here—I have the money ready in the next room.

At this instant a loud noise was heard—the raised voices of two people quarrelling. It was Juba the black, and Solomon the Jew. Mr. Vincent had sent Juba out of the way, on some errand, whilst he had been transacting his affairs with the Jew;

but the black, having executed the commission on which he had been sent, returned, and went into his master's bed-chamber, to read at his leisure a letter which he had just received from his wife. He did not at first see the Jew, and he was spelling out the words of his wife's letter.

‘ My dear Juba,

‘ I take this op-por-tu—’

—*nity* he would have said ; but the Jew, who had held his breath in, to avoid discovery, till he could hold it no longer, now drew it so loud, that Juba started, looked round, and saw the feet of a man, which appeared beneath the bottom of the window curtain. Where fears of supernatural appearances were out of the question, our negro was a man of courage : he had no doubt that the man who was concealed behind the curtain was a robber, but the idea of a robber did not unnerve him like that of an Obeah woman. With presence of mind worthy of a greater danger, Juba took down his master's pistols which hung over the chimney-piece, and marching deliberately up to the enemy, he seized the Jew by the throat, exclaiming—

‘ You rob my massa?—You dead man, if you rob my massa.’

Terrified at the sight of the pistol, the Jew instantly explained who he was ; and producing his large purse, assured Juba that he was come to lend money, and not to take it from his master. But this appeared highly improbable to Juba, who believed his master to be the richest man in the world : besides, the Jew's language was scarcely intelligible to him, and he saw secret terror in Solomon's countenance. Solomon had an antipathy to the sight of a black, and he shrunk from the negro with strong signs of aversion. Juba would not relinquish his hold ; each went on talking in their own angry

gibberish as loud as they could, till at last the negro fairly dragged the Jew into the presence of his master and Mr. Percival.

It is impossible to describe Mr. Vincent's confusion, or Mr. Percival's astonishment. The Jew's explanation was perfectly intelligible to him; he saw at once all the truth. Vincent, overwhelmed with shame, stood the picture of despair, incapable of uttering a single syllable.

There is no necessity to borrow this money on my account, said Mr. Percival calmly; and if there were, we could probably have it on more reasonable terms than this gentleman proposes.

I care not on what terms I have it—I care not what becomes of me—I am undone! cried Vincent.

Mr. Percival coolly dismissed the Jew, made a sign to Juba to leave the room, and then, addressing himself to Vincent, said—I can borrow the money that I want elsewhere—fear no reproaches from me—I foresaw all this—you have lost this sum at play—It is well that it was not your whole fortune. I have only one question to ask you, on which depends my esteem—Have you informed Miss Portman of this affair?

I have not yet told her, but I was actually half down stairs in my way to tell her.

Then, Mr. Vincent, you are still my friend. I know the difficulty of such an avowal—but it is necessary,

Cannot you, dear Mr. Percival, save me the intolerable shame of confessing my own folly?—Spare me this mortification—be yourself the bearer of this intelligence, and the mediator in my favour.

I will with pleasure, said Mr. Percival—I will go this instant—but I cannot say that I have any hope of persuading Belinda to believe in your

being irrevocably reclaimed from the charms of play.

Indeed, my excellent friend, she may rely upon me : I feel such horror at the past, such heartfelt resolution against all future temptation, that you may pledge yourself for my total reformation.

Mr. Percival promised that he would exert all his influence, except by pledging his own honour : to this he could not consent.—If I have any good news for you, I will return as soon as possible ; but I will not be the bearer of any painful intelligence, said he : and he departed, leaving Mr. Vincent in a state of anxiety which, to his temper, was a punishment sufficient for almost any imprudence he could have committed.

Mr. Percival returned no more that night. The next morning Mr. Vincent received the following letter from Belinda.—He guessed his fate—he had scarcely power to read the words.

‘ I promised you, that whenever my own mind should be decided, I would not hold yours in suspense—yet, at this moment, I find it difficult to keep my word.

‘ Instead of lamenting, as you have often done, that my esteem for your many excellent qualities never rose beyond the bounds of friendship, we have now reason to rejoice at this, since it will save us much useless pain. It spares me the difficulty of conquering a passion that might be fatal to my happiness, and it will diminish the regret which you may feel at our separation. I am now obliged to say, that *circumstances* have made me certain we could not add to our mutual felicity by any nearer connexion.

‘ The hopes of enjoying domestic happiness with a person whose manners, temper, and tastes, suited

my own, induced me to listen to your addresses. But this happiness I could never enjoy with one who has any propensity to the love of play.

‘For my own sake, as well as for yours, I rejoice that your fortune has not been materially injured; this relieves me from the fear, that my present conduct should be imputed to interested motives. Indeed, such is the generosity of your temper, that in any situation I should scarcely have reason to apprehend from you such a suspicion.

‘The absolute impossibility of my forming at present a *connexion with another*, will prevent you from imagining that I am secretly influenced by sentiments different from those which I avow: nor can any weak doubts on this subject expose me to my own reproaches.

‘You perceive, sir, that I am not willing utterly to lose your esteem, even when I renounce, in the most unequivocal manner, all claim upon your affections. If any thing should appear to you harsh in this letter, I beg you to impute it to the real cause—my desire to spare you all painful suspense, by convincing you at once, that my determination is irrevocable. With sincere wishes for your happiness, I bid you farewell.

‘BELINDA PORTMAN.’

A few hours after Mr. Vincent had read this letter, he threw himself into a postchaise, and set out for Germany. He saw that all hopes of being united to Belinda were over, and he hurried as far from her as possible. Her letter rather soothed than irritated his temper; the praises of his generosity were highly gratifying, and they had so powerful an effect upon his mind, that he was determined to prove that they were deserved. His conscience reproached him with not having made

sufficiently honourable mention of Clarence Hervey's conduct on the night when he was on the point of destroying himself. Before he left London he wrote a full account of this whole transaction, to be given to Miss Portman after his departure. It was delivered to Belinda by poor Juba, who would willingly have accompanied his unfortunate master in his voluntary exile, but Mr. Vincent would not permit him to give this proof of attachment.

Go, said he, to your wife, and to your happy home.

The poor fellow put his master's letter into Miss Portman's hand, without being able to utter one syllable; the tears rolled down his black cheeks, when she kindly said to him—

I shall see you again, Juba, soon, at your cottage.

But massa will not be there—massa is gone!—When shall we see massa again?—Never—never!

He sobbed like an infant.

No torments in the power of human cruelty to inflict, could in all probability have extorted from this negro one of the tears which affection wrung from him so plentifully.

Belinda was deeply touched by this faithful creature's sensibility. He recalled to her mind some of the most amiable traits in his master's character, some of the happy days that she had spent in Mr. Vincent's company. His letter—his farewell letter—she could not read without great emotion. It was written with true feeling, but in a manly style, without one word of vain lamentation. His generosity, in speaking of Clarence Hervey, was not lost upon her.

What a pity, thought Belinda, that with so many

good and great qualities, I should be forced to bid him adieu for ever!

Though she strongly felt the pain of this separation, yet she could not recede from her decision: nothing could tempt her to connect herself with a man who had the fatal taste for play. Even Mr. Percival, much as he loved his ward, much as he wished for his union with Belinda, dared not pledge his honour for Mr. Vincent on this point.

Lady Anne Percival, in a very kind and sensible letter, expressed the highest approbation of Belinda's conduct, and the most polite and sincere hopes that Belinda would still continue to think of her with affection and esteem; though she had been so rash in her advice, and though her friendship had been apparently so selfish.

CHAPTER XXX.

NEWS.

Do not expect that I should pretend to be sorry for Mr. Vincent, said Lady Delacour. Let him be as generous and as penitent as he pleases, I am heartily glad that he is on his way to Germany. I dare say he will find in the upper or *lower* circles of the empire, some heroine in the Kotzebue taste, who will alternately make him miserable, till he is happy; and happy, till he is miserable. He is one of those men who require great emotions.—Fine lovers these make for stage effect!—but the worst husbands in the world!

I hope, Belinda, you give me credit for having

judged better of Mr. Vincent than Lady Anne Percival did?

For having judged worse of him, you mean? Lady Anne always judges *as well* as possible of every body.

I will allow you to play upon words in a friend's defence, but do not be alarmed for the reputation of Lady Anne's judgement. If it will be any satisfaction to you, I can with thorough sincerity assure you, that I never liked her so well in my life, as since I have detected her in a mistake. It saves her, in my imagination, from the odium of being a perfect character.

And there was something so handsome in her manner of writing to me, when she found out her error, said Belinda—

Very true, and my friend Mr. Percival behaved handsomely. Where friendships clash, it is not every man who has clearness of head sufficient to know his duty to his neighbour. Mr. Percival said no more than just the thing he ought, for his ward. You have reason to be obliged to him; and as we are returning thanks to all persons concerned in our deliverance from this imminent danger, Juba the black and Solomon the Jew ought to come in for their share; for without that wrestling match of theirs, the truth might never have been dragged to light, and Mr. Vincent would have been in due course of time your lord and master. But the danger is over; you need not look so terrified—do not be like the man who dropped down dead with terror, when he was shown by daylight the broken bridge which he had galloped over in the dark.

Lady Delacour was in such high spirits, that, without regard to connexion, she ran on from one subject to another.

You have proved to me, my dear, said she, that

you are not a girl to marry, because your wedding-gown was sent home, or because the day was fixed, or because *things had gone so far*. I give you infinite credit for your *civil courage*, as Dr. X—— calls it: military courage, as he said to me yesterday—military courage, that seeks the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth, may be had for sixpence a day. But civil courage, such as enabled the Princess Parizade, in the Arabian Tales, to go straight up the hill to her object, though the magical multitude of advising and abusive voices continually called to her to turn back, is one of the rarest qualities in man or woman, and not to be had for love, money, or admiration.

You place admiration not only above money, but above love, in your climax, I perceive, said Belinda smiling.

I will give you leave to be as philosophically sarcastic as you please, my dear, if you will only smile, and if you will not look as pale as Seneca's Paulina, whose story we heard—from whom?

From Mr. Hervey, I believe.

His name was ready upon your lips; I hope he was not far from your thoughts?

No one could be further from my thoughts, said Belinda.

Well, very likely—I believe it, because you say it; and because it is impossible.

Rally me as much as you please, my dear Lady Delacour, I assure you that I speak the simple truth.

I cannot suspect you of affectation, my dear. Therefore honestly tell me, if Clarence Hervey were at your feet this instant, would you spurn him from you?

Spurn him! No—I would neither spurn him, nor *motion him from me*; but without using any of the terms in the heroine's dictionary—

ould refuse him? interrupted Lady Delacour with a look of indignation—you would refuse

not say so, *I believe.*

ould accept him?

not say so, *I am sure.*

ould tell him that you were not *accus-*
him?

actly in those words, perhaps.

we shall not quarrel about words, said
Delacour; I only beg you to remember your
principles; and if ever you are put to the trial,
be consistent. The first thing in a philosopher is
consistency.

actly, for the credit of my philosophy,
no immediate danger of its being put to the

unfortunately, you surely mean; unless you are
at it might not stand the test. But I was
when I spoke of consistency, to remind you,
your own and Mr. Percival's arguments
et cetera may now, with equal propriety, be
against you.

against me?

are evidently as applicable to second as to
first, I think.

as they are, said Belinda; but I really and
truly am not inclined to think of love at present;
really as there is no necessity that I should.

She took up a book, and Lady Delacour for
an hour abstained from any further raillery.
More than half an hour she could not be si-
lently subject uppermost in her thoughts.

Hervey, cried she, were not the
honourable of blockheads, he might be the
copy of men. This Virginia!—O, how I

hate her!—I am sure poor Clarence cannot love her.

Because you hate her—or because you hate her without having ever seen her? said Belinda.

O, I know what she must be, replied Lady Delacour—a soft, sighing, dying damsel, who puts bullfinches in her bosom. Smile, smile, my dear; you cannot help it: in spite of all your generosity, I know you must think as I do, and wish as I do, that she were at the bottom of the Black Sea this instant. Lady Delacour stood for some minutes musing, and then exclaimed, ‘I will move heaven and earth to break off this absurd match.’

Good heavens, my dear Lady Delacour, what do you mean?

Mean! my dear? I mean what I say, which very few people do: no wonder I should surprise you!

I conjure you, cried Belinda, if you have the least regard for my honour and happiness——

I have not the least, but the greatest; and depend upon it, my dear, I will do nothing that shall injure *that dignity of mind, and delicacy of character*, which I admire and love as much as Clarence Hervey did, and does. Trust to me—not Lady Anne Percival herself can be more delicate in her notions of propriety, than I am for my friends, and, since my reformation, I hope I may add, for myself—Fear nothing.—As she finished these words, she rang for her carriage. I don’t ask you to go out with me, my dear Belinda; I give you leave to sit in this arm-chair till I come back again, with your feet upon the fender, a book in your hand, and this little table beside you, like Lady S.’s picture of Comfort.

Lady Delacour spent the rest of the morning abroad; and when she returned home, she gave no account of what she had been doing, or of what or

whom she had seen. This was so unusual, that Belinda could not avoid taking notice of it. Notwithstanding her ladyship's eulogium upon her own delicate sense of propriety, Miss Portman could not confide, with perfect resignation, in her prudence.

Your ladyship reproached me once, said she in a playful tone, for my provoking want of curiosity: you have completely cured me of this defect; for never was woman more curious than I am, at this instant, to know the secret scheme that you have in agitation.

Have patience a little longer, and the mystery will be unravelled. In the mean time, trust that every thing I do is for the best. However, as you have behaved pretty well, I will give you one leading hint, when you have explained to me what you meant by saying that your heart is not at present inclined to love. Pray have you quarrelled with love for ever?

No; but I can exist without it.

Have you a heart?

I hope so.

And it can exist without love? I now understand what was once said to me by a foolish lordling:—
'Of what use is the sun to the dial *?'

Company came in, and relieved Belinda from any further raillery. Lady Boucher and Mrs. Margaret Delacour were, amongst a large party, to dine at Lady Delacour's. At dinner, the dowager seized the first auspicious moment of silence to announce a piece of intelligence, which she flattered herself would fix the eyes of all the world upon her.

So Mr. Clarence Hervey is married at last!

Married! cried Lady Delacour—she had suffi-

* A fact,

cient presence of mind not to look directly at Belinda; but she fixed the dowager's eyes, by repeating—Married! are you sure of it?

Positive—positive! He was privately married yesterday at his aunt Lady Almeria's apartments, at Windsor, to Miss Hartley. I told you it was to be, and now it is over; and a very extraordinary match Mr. Hervey has made of it, after all. Think of his going, at last, and marrying a girl who has been his mistress for years! Nobody will visit her, to be sure. Lady Almeria is excessively distressed; she did all she could to prevail on her brother, the bishop, to marry his nephew; but he very properly refused, giving it as a reason, that the girl's character was too well known.

I thought the bishop was at Spa, interposed a gentleman, whilst the dowager drew breath.

O dear, no, sir; you have been misinformed, resumed she: the bishop has been returned from Spa this great while, and he has refused to see his nephew, to my certain knowledge. After all, I cannot but pity poor Clarence for being driven into this match. Mr. Hartley has a prodigious fine fortune, to be sure; and he hurried things forward at an amazing rate, to patch up his daughter's reputation. He said, as I am credibly informed, yesterday morning, that if Clarence did not marry the girl before night, he would carry her and her fortune off the next day to the West Indies. Now the fortune was certainly an object.

My dear Lady Boucher, interrupted Lord Delacour; you must be misinformed in that particular: fortune is no object to Clarence Hervey; he is too generous a fellow to marry for fortune. What do you think—what do you say, Lady Delacour?

I say, and think, and feel as you do, my lord, said Lady Delacour.

You say, and think, and feel the same as my lord. Very extraordinary, indeed ! said the dowager. Then if it were not for the sake of the fortune, pray why did Mr. Hervey marry at all ? Can any body guess ?

I should guess, because he was in love, said Lord Delacour ; for I remember, that was the reason I married myself.

My dear good lord—but when I tell you the girl had been his mistress till he was tired of her—

My Lady Boucher, said Mrs. Margaret Delacour, who had hitherto listened in silence—My Lady Boucher, you have been misinformed ; Miss Hartley never was Clarence Hervey's mistress.

I'm mighty glad you think so, Mrs. Delacour ; but I assure you, nobody else is so *charitable*. Those who live in the world hear a great deal more than those who live out of the world. I can promise you nobody will visit the bride, and that is the thing by which we are to judge.

Then the dowager and the rest of the company continued to descant upon the folly of the match. Those who wished to pay their court to Lady Delacour, were the loudest in their astonishment at his throwing himself away in this manner. Her ladyship smiled, and kept them in play by her address, on purpose to withdraw all eyes from Miss Portman, whilst, from time to time, she stole a glance at Belinda, to observe how she was affected by what passed : she was provoked by Belinda's self-possession. At last, when it had been settled that all the Herveys were *odd*, but that this match of Clarence's was the *oddest* of all the odd things that any of the family had done for many generations, Mrs. Delacour calmly said :

Are you sure, Lady Boucher, that Mr. Hervey is married ?

Positive ! as I said before, positive ! Madam, my

woman had it from Lady Newland's Swiss, who had it from Lady Singleton's Frenchwoman, who had it from Longueville the hair-dresser, who had it from Lady Almeria's own woman, who was present at the ceremony, and must know, if any body does.

The report has come to us zigzag as quick as lightning, yet it does not flash conviction upon me, said Lady Delacour.

Nor upon me, said Mrs. Delacour, for this simple reason : I have seen Miss Hartley within these two hours, and I *had it* from her, that she is not married.

Not married ! cried the dowager with terror.

I rather think not ; she is now with her father, at my house, at dinner, I believe, and Clarence Hervey is at Lady Almeria's, at Windsor : her ladyship is confined by a fit of the gout, and sent for her nephew yesterday. If people who live out of the world hear less, they sometimes hear more correctly than those who live in it.

Pray when does Mr. Hervey return from Windsor ? said the incorrigible dowager.

To-morrow, madam, said Mrs. Delacour. As your ladyship is going to several parties this evening, I think it but *charitable* to set you right in these particulars, and I hope you will be so *charitable* as to contradict the report of Miss Hartley's having been Clarence's mistress.

Why, as to that, if the young lady is not married, we must presume there are good reasons for it, said the dowager. Pray, on which side was the match broken off ?

On neither side, answered Mrs. Delacour.

The thing goes on then ? and what day is the marriage to take place ? said Lady Boucher.

On Monday—or Tuesday—or Wednesday—or Thursday—or Friday—or Saturday—or Sunday, I believe, replied Mrs. Delacour, who had the pru-

dent art of giving answers effectually baffling to the curiosity of gossips.

The dowager consoled herself in her utmost need with a full plate of brandy cherries, and spoke not a word more during the second course. When the ladies retired after the dessert, she again commenced hostilities: she dared not come to open war with Mrs. Delacour; but in a by battle, in a corner, she carried every thing before her; and she triumphantly whispered, We shall see, ma'am, that it will turn out, as I told you, that Miss Rachel, or Virginia, or whatever he pleases to call her, has been what I said; and, as I said, *nobody* will visit her, not a soul: fifty people I can count, who have declared to me they've made up their minds; and my own's made up, I candidly confess; and Lady Delacour, I am sure by her silence and looks, is of my way of thinking, and has no opinion of the young lady: as to Miss Portman, she is, poor thing! of course so wrapped up in her own affairs, no wonder she says nothing. That was a sad business of Mr. Vincent's; I am surprised to see her look even as well as she does after it. Mr. Percival, I am told,—said the well-informed dowager, lowering her voice so much, that the lovers of scandal were obliged to close their heads round her,—Mr. Percival, I am informed, refused his consent to his ward, (who is not of age) on account of an anonymous letter, and it is supposed Mr. Vincent desired it for an excuse to get off handsomely. Fighting that duel about her, with Sir Philip Baddely, settled his love—so he is gone to Germany, and she is left to wear the willow, which, you see, becomes her, as well as every thing else. Did she eat any dinner, ma'am?—you sat next her.

Yes—more than I did, I am sure—

Very extraordinary! Then perhaps Sir Philip

Baddely's *on* again—Lord bless me, what a match would that be for her! Why, Mrs. Stanhope might then, indeed, deserve to be called the match-maker general. The seventh of her nieces this—But look, there's Mrs. Delacour leading Miss Portman off into the trictrac cabinet, with a face full of business—her hand in hers—Lord, I did not know they were on that footing! I wonder what's going forward—suppose old Hartley was to propose for Miss Portman—there would be a *dénouement*!—and cut his daughter off with a shilling! Nothing's impossible, you know. Did he ever see Miss Portman? I must go, and find out, positively.

In the mean time Mrs. Delacour, unconscious of the curiosity she had excited, was speaking to Belinda in the trictrac cabinet.

My dear Miss Portman, said she, you have a great deal of good-nature, else I should not venture to apply to you on the present occasion. Will you oblige me, and serve a friend of mine—a gentleman who, as I once imagined, was an admirer of yours?

I will do any thing in my power to oblige any friend of yours, madam, said Belinda; but of whom are you speaking?

Of Mr. Hervey, my dear young lady.

He was never an admirer of mine, said Belinda colouring deeply; but that does not make me the less disposed to serve him, as a friend—tell me how it can possibly be in my power.

That you shall know immediately, said Mrs. Delacour, rummaging and rustling for a considerable time amongst a heap of letters, which she had pulled out of the largest pockets that ever woman wore, even in the last century.

O, here it is, continued she, opening and looking into them. May I trouble you just to look over this letter? It is from poor Mr. Hartley; he

is, as you will see, excessively fond of this daughter, whom he has so fortunately discovered after his long search: he is dreadfully nervous, and has been terribly alarmed by these idle gossiping stories. You find, by what Lady Boucher said at dinner, that they have settled it amongst them, that Virginia is not a fit person to be visited; that she has been Clarence's mistress, instead of his pupil. Mr. Hartley, you see by this letter, is almost out of his senses with the apprehension that his daughter's reputation is ruined. I sent my carriage to Twickenham, the moment I received this letter, for the poor girl and her *gouvernante*. They came to me this morning; but what can I do?—I am only one old woman against a confederacy of veteran gossips; but if I could gain you and Lady Delacour for my allies, I should fear no adversaries. Virginia is to stay with me for some days; and Lady Delacour, I see, has a great mind to come to see her; but she does not like to come without you, and she says that she does not like to ask you to accompany her. I don't understand her delicacy about the matter: I have none, believing as I do, that there is no foundation whatever for these malicious reports, which, *entre nous*, originated, I fancy, with Mrs. Marriott. Now, will you oblige me? If you and Lady Delacour will come and see Virginia to-morrow, all the world would follow your example the next day. 'Tis often cowardice that makes people ill-natured:—have you the courage, my good Miss Portman, to be the first to do a benevolent action? I do assure you, continued Mrs. Delacour with great earnestness—I do assure you, I would as soon put my hand into that fire, this moment, as ask you to do any thing that I thought improper—but forgive me for pressing this point; I

am anxious to have your suffrage in her favour: Miss Belinda Portman's character for prudence and propriety stands so high, and is fixed so firmly, that she may venture to let us cling to it; and I am as firmly convinced of the poor girl's innocence, as I am of yours, and when you see her, you will be of my opinion.

I assure you, Mrs. Delacour, said Belinda, that you have wasted a great deal of eloquence upon this occasion, for—

I am sorry for it, interrupted Mrs. Delacour, rising from her seat with a look of some displeasure; I meant not to distress or offend you, Miss Portman, by *my eloquence*—I am only concerned, that I should have so far mistaken your character as to expose myself to this refusal.

I have given no refusal, said Belinda mildly, you did not let me finish my sentence.

I beg pardon, that is a foolish old trick of mine.

Mrs. Delacour, I was going to say, has wasted a great deal of eloquence: for I am entirely of her opinion, and I shall with the greatest readiness comply with her request.

You are a charming generous girl, and I am a passionate old fool—thank you a thousand times.

You are not at all obliged to me, said Belinda. When I first heard this story, I believed it, as Lady Boucher now does: but I have had reason to alter my opinion, and perhaps the same means of information would have changed hers: once convinced, it is impossible to relapse into suspicion.

Impossible to *you*—the most truly virtuous women are always the least suspicious and uncharitable in their opinion of their own sex. Lady Anne Percival inspired me with this belief, and Miss Portman confirms it. I admire your courage

in daring to come forward in the defence of innocence. I am very rude, alas! for praising you so much.

I have not a right to your admiration, said Belinda, for I must honestly confess to you, that I should not have this courage, if there were any danger in the case: I do not think, that, in doubtful cases, it is the business of a young woman to hazard her own reputation, by an attempt to preserve another's: I do not imagine, at least, that I am of sufficient consequence in the world for this purpose; therefore I should never attempt it. It is the duty of such women as Mrs. Delacour, whose reputations are beyond the power of scandal, to come forward in the defence of injured innocence, but this would not be courage in Belinda Portman, it would be presumption and temerity.

Well, if you will not let me admire your courage, or your generosity, or your prudence, said Mrs. Delacour laughing, you must positively let me admire *you* altogether, and love you too, for I cannot help it. Farewell.

After the company was gone, Lady Delacour was much surprised by the earnestness with which Belinda pressed the request, that they might the next morning pay a visit to Virginia.

My dear, said Lady Delacour, to tell you the truth, I am full of curiosity, and excessively anxious to go. I hesitated merely on your account; I fancied that you would not like the visit; and that, if I went without you, it might be taken notice of. —But I am delighted to find that you will come with me; I can only say, that you have more generosity than I should have in the same situation.

The next morning they went together to Mrs. Delacour's. In their way thither, Belinda, to divert her own thoughts, and to rouse Lady Delacour from

the profound and unnatural silence into which she had fallen, petitioned her to finish the history of Sir Philip Baddely, the dog, Miss Annabella Luttridge, and her billet-doux.

For some of my high crimes and misdemeanors, you vowed that you would not tell me the remainder of the story, till the whole week had elapsed; now will you satisfy my curiosity? You recollect, that you left off just where you said that you were come to the best part of the story.

Was I? did I?—Very true, we shall have time enough to finish it by and by, my dear, said Lady Delacour; at present my poor head is running upon something else, and I have left off being an accomplished actress, or I could talk of one subject, and think of another, as well as the best of you. Stop the carriage, my dear, I am afraid they have forgot my orders.

Did you carry what I desired this morning to Mrs. Delacour's? said her ladyship to one of her footmen.

I did, my lady.

And did you say from me, that it was not to be opened till I came?

Yes, my lady.

Where did you leave it?

In Mrs. Delacour's dressing-room, my lady:—she desired me to take it up there, and she locked the door, and said no one should go in till you came.

Very well—go on.—Belinda, my dear, I hope that I have worked up your curiosity to the highest pitch.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DENOUEMENT.

CURIOSITY was not at this instant the strongest passion in Belinda's mind. When the carriage stopped at Mrs. Delacour's door, her heart almost ceased to beat; but she summoned resolution to go through, with firmness and dignity, the task she had undertaken.

Clarence Hervey was not in the room when they entered, nor was Virginia: Mrs. Ormond said, that she had been extremely feverish during the night, and that she had advised her not to get up till late in the day. But Mrs. Delacour immediately went for her, and in a few minutes she made her appearance.

Belinda and Lady Delacour exchanged a glance of surprise and admiration. There was a grace and simplicity in her manner, joined to an air of *naïveté*, that made an irresistible impression in her favour. Lady Delacour, however, after the first surprise was over, seemed to relapse into her former opinion; and the piercing looks which her ladyship from time to time cast upon Virginia as she spoke, produced their effect. She was abashed and silent. Belinda endeavoured to engage her in conversation, and to her she talked with ease, and even with freedom. Virginia examined Miss Portman's countenance with a species of artless curiosity and interest, that was not restrained by factitious politeness. This examination was not peculiarly agreeable to Belinda, yet it was made with so much apparent simplicity, that she could not be displeased.

On the first pause in the conversation, Mrs. Delacour said, Pray, my dear Lady Delacour, what is

this wonderful present that you sent to me this morning, which you desire that no one should see till you came?

I cannot satisfy your curiosity yet, replied Lady Delacour: I must wait till Clarence Hervey comes, for the present is intended for him.

An air of solemn mystery in her ladyship's manner, as she pronounced these words, excited general attention. There was a dead silence, which lasted several minutes: some feeble attempts were then made by each of the company, to start a fresh subject of conversation; but it would not do—all relapsed into the silence of expectation. At last, Clarence Hervey arrived. Belinda rejoiced that the universal curiosity, which Lady Delacour had inspired, prevented any one's observing the sudden change in Mr. Hervey's countenance when he beheld her.

A pretty set of curious children you are! cried Lady Delacour laughing. Do you know, Clarence, that they are all dying with impatience, to see *un gage d'amitié* that I have brought for you; and the reason that they are so curious is simply, because I had the address to say, in a solemn voice, 'I cannot satisfy your curiosity till Clarence Hervey arrives.' Now, follow me, my friends; and if you be disappointed, lay the blame not to me, but to your own imaginations.

She led the way to Mrs. Delacour's dressing-room, and all the company followed.

Now, what do you expect to see? said she, putting the key into the door.

After waiting some moments for a reply, but in vain, she threw open the door, and they saw, hung before the wall opposite to them, a green curtain.

I thought, my dear Clarence, resumed Lady Delacour, that no present could be more agreeable to you, than a companion for your Virginia. Does

this figure, continued she, drawing back the curtain—does this figure give you the idea of Paul?

Paul! said Clarence.—It is a naval officer in full uniform; what can your ladyship mean?—Virginia perhaps will know what I mean, if you will only stand out of her way, and let her see the picture.

At these words Clarence made way for Virginia: she turned her eyes upon the picture—uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless upon the floor.

Take it coolly, said Lady Delacour, and she will come to her senses presently. Young ladies must shriek and faint upon certain occasions; but men (looking at Clarence Hervey) need not always be dupes. This is only a *scene*; consider it as such, and admire the actress, as I do.

Actress! O, she is no actress! cried Mrs. Ormond.

Clarence Hervey raised her from the ground, and Belinda sprinkled water over her face.

She's dead!—she's dead! O, my sweet child! she's dead; exclaimed Mrs. Ormond, trembling so violently that she could not sustain Virginia's weight.

She is no actress, indeed, said Clarence Hervey; her pulse is gone!

Lady Delacour looked at Virginia's pale lips, touched her cold hands, and, with a look of horror, cried out, Good heavens! what have I done? What shall we do with her?

Give her air—give her air, air, air! cried Belinda.

You keep the air from her, Mrs. Ormond, said Mrs. Delacour. Let us leave her to Miss Portman; she has more presence of mind than any of us. And as she spoke, she forced Mrs. Ormond away with her out of the room.

If Mr. Hartley should come, keep him with you,

Mrs. Delacour, said Clarence Hervey. Is her pulse quite gone?

No; it beats stronger and stronger, said Belinda.

Her colour is returning, said Lady Delacour. There! raise her a little, dear Belinda; she is coming to herself.

Had not you better draw the curtain again before that picture, said Miss Portman, lest she should see it the moment she opens her eyes?

Virginia came slowly to her recollection, saw Lady Delacour drawing the curtain before the picture; then fixed her eyes upon Clarence Hervey, without uttering a word.

Are you better now? said he in a gentle tone.

O, do not speak—do not look so kindly! cried Virginia. I am well—quite well—better than I deserve to be;—and she pressed Belinda's hand, as if to thank her for assisting and supporting her.

We may safely leave her now, whispered Belinda to Lady Delacour; we are strangers, and our presence only distresses her.

They withdrew. But the moment Virginia found herself alone with Mr. Hervey, she was seized with an universal tremor; she tried to speak, but could not articulate. At last, she burst into a flood of tears; and when this had in some measure relieved her, she threw herself upon her knees, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, as she looked up to heaven—

O, if I knew what I ought to do!—if I knew what I ought to say —

Shall I tell you, Virginia? And will you believe me?

Yes, yes, yes!

You ought to say—the truth—whatever it may be.

But you will think me the most ungrateful of human beings!

How often must I assure you, Virginia, that I make no claim upon your gratitude. Speak to me—I conjure you, as you value your happiness and mine—speak to me without disguise! What is all this mystery? Why should you fear to let me know what passes in your heart? Why did you shriek at the sight of that picture?

O, forgive me! forgive me! cried Virginia: she would have sunk at his feet, if he had not prevented her.

I will—I can forgive any thing, but deceit. Do not look at me with so much terror, Virginia—I have not deserved it—my wish is to make you happy—I would sacrifice even my own happiness, to secure yours—but do not mislead me, or you ruin us both. Cannot you give me a distinct answer to this simple question?—Why did you shriek at the sight of that picture?

Because—but you will call me *perfidious, ungrateful Virginia!*—because I have seen that figure—he has knelt to me—he has kissed my hand—and I—

Clarence Hervey withdrew his arms, which had supported her, and, placing her upon a sofa, left her, whilst he walked up and down the room for some minutes in silence.

And why, Virginia, said he, stopping short, was it necessary to conceal all this from me? Why was it necessary to persuade that I was beloved? Why was it necessary that my happiness should be the sacrifice?

It shall not!—it shall not! Your happiness shall not be the sacrifice. Heaven is my witness, that there is no sacrifice I would not make for you. Forgive me that shriek! I could not help fainting

indeed ! But I will be yours ; I *ought* to be yours ; and I am not perfidious, I am not ungrateful ; do not look upon me as you did in my dream !

Do not talk to me of dreams, my dear Virginia ; this is no time for trifling ; I ask no sacrifice from you, I ask nothing but truth.

Truth ! Mrs. Ormond knows all the truth. I have concealed nothing from her.

But she has concealed every thing from me, cried Clarence ; and, with a sudden impulse of indignation, he was going to summon her : but when his hand was upon the lock of the door, he paused, returned to Virginia, and said, Let me hear the truth from *your* lips ; it is all I shall ever ask from you. How !—when !—where did you see this man ?

What man ? said Virginia, looking up with the simple expression of innocence in her countenance.

Clarence pointed to the picture.

At the village in the New Forest, at Mrs. Smith's house, said Virginia, one evening when I walked with her from my grandmother's cottage.

And your grandmother knew of this ?

Yes, said Virginia blushing, and she was very much displeased.

And Mrs. Ormond knew of this ? pursued Clarence.

Yes ; but she told me that you would not be displeased at it.

Mr. Hervey made another hasty step toward the door, but, restraining his impetuous temper, he again stopped, and, leaning over the back of a chair, opposite to Virginia, waited in silence for her to proceed.—He waited in vain.

I do not mean to distress you, Miss Hartley, said he.

She burst into tears.—I knew, I knew, cried she, that you *would* be displeased; I told Mrs. Ormond so. I knew you would never forgive me.

In that you were mistaken, said Clarence mildly; I forgive you without difficulty, as I hope you may forgive yourself; nor can it be my wish to extort from you any mortifying confessions. But perhaps it may yet be in my power to serve you, if you will trust to me. I will myself speak to your father. I will do every thing to secure to you the object of your affections, if you will, in this last moment of our connexion, treat me with sincerity, and suffer me to be your friend.

Virginia sobbed so violently for some time, that she could not speak. At last she said—

You are—you are—the most generous of men! You have always been my *best* friend! I am the most ungrateful of human beings! But I am sure I never wished, I never intended, to deceive you. Mrs. Ormond told me——

Do not speak of her at present, or perhaps I may lose my temper, interrupted Clarence in an altered voice; only tell me, I conjure you—tell me, in one word, who is this man? and where is he to be found?

I do not know—I do not understand you, said Virginia.

You do not know!—You will not trust me—then I must leave you to—to Mr. Hartley.

Do not leave me—O, do not leave me in anger! cried Virginia, clinging to him—Not trust you!—I!—not trust you!—O, what *can* you mean? I have no confessions to make! Mrs. Ormond knows every thought of my mind, and so shall you, if you will only hear me. I do not know who *this* man is, I assure you; nor where he is to be found.

And yet you love him? Can you love a man whom you do not know, Virginia?

I only love his figure, I believe, said Virginia.

His figure!

Indeed I am quite bewildered, said Virginia, looking round wildly; I know not what I feel.

If you permitted this man to kneel to you, to kiss your hand, surely you must know that you love him, Virginia?

But that was only in a dream; and Mrs. Ormond said——

Only a dream! But you met him at Mrs. Smith's, in the New Forest?

That was only a picture.

Only a picture! but you have seen the original?

Never—never in my life; and I wish to heaven I had never, never seen that fatal picture! The image haunts me day and night. When I read of heroes in the day, that figure rises to my view, instead of yours. When I go to sleep at night I see it, instead of yours, in my dreams; it speaks to me, it kneels to me. I long ago told Mrs. Ormond this, but she laughed at me. I told her of that frightful dream. I saw you weltering in your blood: I tried to save you, but could not. I heard you say, Perfidious, ungrateful Virginia! you are the cause of my death! O, it was the most dreadful night I ever passed! Still this figure, this picture, was before me; and he was the knight of the white plumes; and it was he who stabbed you; but when I wished him to be victorious, I did not know that he was fighting against you. So Mrs. Ormond told me that I need not blame myself; and she said that you were not so foolish as to be jealous of a picture; but I knew you would be displeased—I knew

you would think me ungrateful—I knew you would never forgive me.

Whilst Virginia rapidly uttered all this, Clarence marked the wild animation of her eyes, the sudden changes of her countenance: he recollected her father's insanity; every feeling of his mind gave way to terror and pity; he approached her with all the calmness that he could assume, took both her hands, and, holding them in his, said in a soothing voice—

My dear Virginia! you are not ungrateful. I do not think you so. I am not displeased with you. You have done nothing to displease me. Compose yourself, dear Virginia.

I am quite composed, now you again call me dear Virginia. Only I am afraid, as I always told Mrs. Ormond, that I do not love you *enough*; but she said that I did, and that my thinking so was the strongest proof of my affection.

Virginia now spoke in so consistent a manner, that Clarence could not doubt that she was in the clear possession of her understanding. She repeated to him all that she had said to Mrs. Ormond; and he began to hope that, without any intention to deceive, Mrs. Ormond's ignorance of the human heart led her into a belief that Virginia was in love with him; whilst, in fact, her imagination, exalted by solitude and romance, embodied and became enamoured of a phantom.

I always told Mrs. Ormond that she was mistaken, said Clarence. I never believed that you loved me, Virginia, till——(he paused, and carefully examined her countenance)—till you yourself gave me reason to think so. Was it only a principle of gratitude, then, that dictated your answer to my letter?

She looked irresolute; and at last, in a low voice, said—

If I could see, if I could speak to Mrs. Ormond—

She cannot tell what are the secret feelings of your heart, Virginia. Consult no Mrs. Ormond. Consult no human creature but yourself.

But Mrs. Ormond told me that you loved me, and that you had educated me to be your wife.

Mr. Hervey made an involuntary exclamation against Mrs. Ormond's folly.

How, then, can you be happy, continued Virginia, if I am so ungrateful as to say I do not love you? That I do not *love* you!—Oh! *that* I cannot say; for I do love you better than any one living, except my father, and with the same sort of affection that I feel for him. You ask me to tell you the secret feelings of my heart.—The only secret feeling of which I am conscious, is—a wish not to marry, unless I could see in reality such a person as—But that I knew was only a picture, a dream; and I thought that I ought at least to sacrifice my foolish imaginations to you, who have done so much for me. I knew that it would be the height of ingratitude to refuse you; and besides, my father told me, that you would not accept of my fortune without my hand, so I consented to marry you: forgive me, if these were wrong motives, I thought them right. Only tell me what I can do to make you happy, as I am sure I wish to do; to that wish I would sacrifice every other feeling.

Sacrifice nothing, dear Virginia. We may both be happy without making any sacrifice of our feelings, cried Clarence. And, transported at regaining his own freedom, Virginia's simplicity never appeared to him so charming as at this moment.—

Dearest Virginia, forgive me for suspecting you for one instant of any thing unhandsome. Mrs. Ormond, with the very best intentions possible, has led us both to the brink of misery. But I find you such as I always thought you, ingenuous, affectionate, innocent.

And you are not angry with me? interrupted Virginia with joyful eagerness; and you will not think me ungrateful? And you will not be unhappy? And Mrs. Ormond was mistaken? And you do not wish that I should *love* you, that I should be your wife, I mean? O, don't deceive me, for I cannot help believing whatever you say.

Clarence Hervey, to give her a convincing proof that Mrs. Ormond had misled her as to his sentiments, immediately avowed his passion for Belinda.

You have relieved me from all doubt, all fear, all anxiety, said Virginia with the sweetest expression of innocent affection in her countenance. May you be as happy as you deserve to be! May Belinda—is not that her name?—May Belinda—

At this moment Lady Delacour half opened the door, exclaiming—

Human patience can wait no longer!

Will you trust me to explain for you, dear Virginia? said Clarence.

Most willingly, said Virginia, retiring as Lady Delacour advanced. Pray leave me here alone, whilst you, who are used to talk before strangers, speak for me.

Dare you venture, Clarence, said her ladyship, as she closed the door, to leave her alone with that picture? You are no lover, if you be not jealous.

I am not jealous, said Clarence, yet I am a lover—a passionate lover.

A passionate lover ! cried Lady Delacour, stopping short as they were crossing the antechamber ;—then I have done nothing but mischief. In love with Virginia ? I will not, cannot believe it.

In love with Belinda !—Cannot you, will not you believe it ?

My dear Clarence, I never doubted it for an instant. But are you at liberty to own it to any body but me ?

I am at liberty to declare it to all the world.

You transport me with joy ! I will not keep you from her a second. But stay—I am sorry to tell you, that, as she informed me this morning, *her heart is not at present inclined to love*. And here are half-a-dozen poor wretches in this room dying with curiosity. Curiosity is as strong a passion as love, and has as good a claim to compassion.

As he entered the room, Clarence Hervey's first glance was at Belinda ; and rapid as it was, it explained his heart. Regardless of the spectators he hurried to her, seized her hand, and in the most passionate terms declared, that from the moment he had discovered her real character, at the masquerade at Lady Singleton's, his whole soul had been hers.

Belinda put her arm within Lady Delacour's, trembling so that she could scarcely stand. Lady Delacour pressed her hand, and was perfectly silent.

And Miss Portman is to believe in your love ! cried Mrs. Margaret Delacour, when she has seen you on the very eve of marriage with another lady ?

The strongest merit I can plead with such a woman as Miss Portman is, that I was ready to sacrifice my own happiness to a sense of duty. Now that I am at liberty——

Now that you are at liberty! interrupted Lady Delacour, you are in a vast hurry to offer your whole soul to a lady, who has for months seen all your merits with perfect insensibility, and who has been, notwithstanding all my operations, stoneblind to your love.

The struggles of my passion cannot totally have escaped Belinda's penetration, said Clarence. But I like her a thousand times the better for not having trusted merely to appearances. That love is most to be valued, which cannot be easily won. In my opinion there is a prodigious difference between a warm imagination and a warm heart!

Well! said Lady Delacour, we have all of us seen *Pamela maritata*, let us now see *Belinda in love*, if that be possible—*If!*—Forgive me this last stroke of raillery, my dear—in spite of all my raillery, I do believe that the prudent Belinda is more capable of feeling real permanent passion, than any of the dear sentimental young ladies, whose motto is—

All for love, or the world well lost.

That is just my opinion, said Mrs. Margaret Delacour.

But pray what is become of Mr. Hartley? said Clarence, looking round—I do not see him.

No: for I have hid him, said Lady Delacour: he shall be forthcoming presently.

Dear Mr. Clarence Hervey, what have you done with my Virginia? said Mrs. Ormond.

Dear Mrs. Ormond, what have you done with her? replied Clarence. By your mistaken kindness, by insisting upon doing us both good against our wills, you were very near making us both miserable for life. But I blame nobody, I have no right to blame any one so much as myself. All

this has arisen from my own presumption and imprudence. Nothing could be more absurd than my scheme of educating a woman in solitude, to make her fit for society. I might have foreseen what must happen, that Virginia would consider me as her tutor, her father, not as her lover, or her husband; that, with the most affectionate of hearts, she could for me feel nothing but *gratitude*.

Nothing but gratitude! repeated Mrs. Ormond, with a degree of amazement in her countenance which made every body present smile: I am sure I thought she was dying for love of you.

My dear Belinda, whispered Lady Delacour, if I might judge by the colour of this cheek, which has been for some moments permanent crimson, I should guess that you were beginning to find out *of what use the sun is to the dial*.

You will not let me hear what Mr. Hervey is saying, replied Belinda; I am very curious.

Curiosity is a stronger passion than love, as I told him just now, said Lady Delacour.

In spite of all his explanations, Mrs. Ormond could not be made to comprehend Virginia's feelings. She continually repeated—

But it is impossible for Virginia, or for any body, to be in love with a picture.

It is not said that she is in love with a picture, replied Mrs. Delacour, though even for that I could find you a precedent.

My dear Lady Delacour, said Mrs. Ormond, will you explain to us how that picture came into your possession, and how it came here, and, in short, all that is to be known about it?

Ay, explain! explain! my dear Lady Delacour, cried Mrs. Delacour—I am afraid I am grown almost as curious as my Lady Boucher. Explain! explain!

Most willingly, said Lady Delacour. To Marriott's ruling passion for birds you are all of you indebted for this discovery. A few weeks ago, whilst we were at Twickenham, as Marriott was waiting at a stationer's, to bid her last adieus to a bullfinch, a gentleman came into the shop where she and Bobby (as she calls this bird) were coquetting, and the gentleman was struck even more than Marriott with the bullfinch. He went almost distracted on hearing a particular tune, which this bird sung. I suspected, from the symptoms, that the gentleman must be, or must have been, in love with the bullfinch's mistress. Now the bullfinch was traced home to the *ci-devant* Virginia St. Pierre, the present Miss Hartley. I had my reasons for being curious about her loves and lovers; and as soon as I learned the story from Marriott, I determined, if possible, to find out who this stranger, with the strange passion for bullfinches, might be. I questioned and cross-questioned all those people at the stationer's who were present when he fell into ecstasies; and from the shopman, who had been bribed to secrecy, I learned that our gentleman returned to the stationer's the day after he met Marriott, and watched till he obtained a sight of Virginia as she came to her window. Now it was believed by the girl of this shop, who had lived for some time with Mrs. Ormond—Forgive me, Mr. Hervey, for what I am going to say—forgive me, Mrs. Ormond—scandal, like death, is common to all—it was believed that Virginia was Mr. Hervey's mistress. My stranger no sooner learnt this, than he swore that he would think of her no more; and after bestowing a variety of seaman's execrations upon the villain who had seduced his heavenly creature, he departed from Twickenham, and was no more seen or heard of. My inquiries after him

were indefatigable, but for some time unsuccessful. And so they might have continued, and we might have been all making one another miserable at this moment, if it had not been for Mr. Vincent's great dog Juba—Miss Annabella Luttridge's billet-doux—Sir Philip Baddely's insolence—my Lord Delacour's belief in a quack balsam—and Captain Sunderland's humanity.

Captain Sunderland! who is Captain Sunderland? we never heard of him before, cried Mrs. Ormond.

You shall hear of him just as I did, if you please, said Lady Delacour, and if Belinda will submit to hear me tell the same story twice.

Here her ladyship repeated the history of the battle of the dogs; and of Sir Philip Baddely's knocking down Juba the man for struggling in defence of Juba the dog.

Now the gentleman who assisted my Lord Delacour in bringing the disabled negro across the square to our house was Captain Sunderland. My lord summoned Marriott to produce Lady Boucher's infallible balsam, that it might be tried upon Juba's sprained ankle. Whilst my lord was intent upon the balsam, Marriott was intent upon Captain Sunderland. She recollected that she had met him somewhere before, and the moment he spoke she knew him to be the gentleman who had fallen into ecstasies, in the shop at Twickenham, about the bullfinch. Marriott hastened to me with the news; I hastened to my lord, made him introduce Captain Sunderland to me, and I never rested till he had told me all that I wanted to know. Some years ago, just before he went to sea, he paid a visit to his mother, who then lodged with a widow Smith, in the New Forest. Whilst he was there he heard of the young beauty who lived in the forest,

with a grandmother, who was *not a little particular*; and who would not permit any body to see her.

My captain's curiosity was excited: one day, unseen by the duenna, he obtained a distinct view of Virginia watering her roses and tending her bees. Struck with her uncommon beauty, he approached carefully to the thicket, in which the cottage was inclosed, and found a *lair*, where he concealed himself, day after day, and contemplated at leisure the budding charms of the fair wood-nymph. In short, he became so enamoured, that he was determined to gain admittance at the cottage and declare his passion; but to his honour be it told, that when the history of the poor girl's mother, the situation and fears of the old lady, who was her only friend, were known to him,—in consideration of the extreme youth of the ward, and the extreme age of her guardian, he determined to defer his addresses till his return from the West Indies, whither he was shortly to sail, and where he had hopes of making a fortune that might put him in a situation to render the object of his affections independent. He left a bullfinch with Mrs. Smith, who gave it to Virginia, without telling to whom it had belonged, lest her grandmother might be displeased.

I really thought that all this showed too nice a moral sense for a young dashing lieutenant in the navy, and I was persuaded that my gentleman was only keeping his mistress's secret like a man of honour. With this belief, I regretted that Clarence Hervey should throw himself away upon a girl who was unworthy of him.

I hope, interrupted Clarence, you are perfectly convinced of your mistake?

Perfectly! perfectly!—I am convinced that Virginia is only half mad. But let me go on with my

story. I was determined to discover whether she had any remains of affection for this captain. It was in vain he assured me that she had never seen him. I prevailed upon him to let me go on my own way: I inquired whether he had ever had his picture drawn—he said he had, for his mother, just when he first went out to sea. It had been left at the widow Smith's.—I begged him to procure it for me. He told me it was impossible—I told him I trampled on impossibilities. In short, he got the picture for me, as you see. Now, thought I, if he speaks truth, Virginia will see this picture without emotion, and it will only seem to be a present for Clarence. But if she had ever seen him before, or had any secret to conceal, she will betray herself on the sudden appearance of this picture. Things have turned out contrary to all my expectations, and yet better.—And now, Clarence, I must beg you will prevail on Miss Hartley to appear, I can go on no further without her.

Lady Delacour took Virginia by the hand the moment she entered the room.

Will you trust yourself with me, Miss Hartley? said she; I have made you faint once to-day by the sight of a picture; will you promise me not to faint again when I produce the original?

The original! said Virginia—I will trust myself with you, for I am sure you cannot mean to laugh at me—though, perhaps, I deserve to be laughed at.

Lady Delacour threw open the door of another apartment, Mr. Hartley appeared, and with him Captain Sunderland.

My dear daughter, said Mr. Hartley, give me leave to introduce to you a friend; to whom I owe more obligations than to any man living, except to Mr. Hervey. This gentleman was stationed some

years ago at Jamaica, and in a rebellion of the negroes on my plantation he saved my life. Fortune has accidentally thrown my benefactor in my way. To show my sense of my obligations is out of my power.

Virginia's surprise was extreme: her vivid dreams, the fond wishes of her waking fancy, were at once accomplished. For the first moment she gazed as on an animated picture, and all the ideas of love and romance, associated with this image, rushed upon her mind.

But when the realities by which she was surrounded, dispelled the illusion, she suddenly withdrew her eyes and blushed deeply, with such timid and graceful modesty as charmed every body present.

Captain Sunderland pressed forward, but was stopped by Lady Delacour.

Avaunt! thou real lover! cried she—none but the shadow of a man can hope to approach the visionary maid. In vain has Marraton forced his way through the bushes and briars; in vain has he braved the apparition of the lion; there is yet a phantom barrier, apparently impassable, between him and his Yaratilda, for he is in the world of shadows. Now mark me, Marraton! hurry not this delicate spirit, or perchance you frighten and lose her for ever; but have patience, and gradually and gracefully she will venture into your world of realities—only give her time.

Time! oh yes, give me time, cried Virginia, shrinking back.

My dear Miss Hartley, continued Lady Delacour, in plain prose, to prevent all difficulties and embarrassments, I must inform you that Captain Sunderland will not insist upon prompt payment of your father's debt of gratitude; he has but one

quarter of an hour to spend with us, he is actually under sailing orders, and he must be absent for some weeks, so that you will have time to become accustomed to the idea of a new lover before his return. Clarence, I advise you to accompany Captain Sunderland on this cruise—don't you, Belinda?

And now, my good friends, continued Lady Delacour, shall I finish the novel for you?

If your ladyship pleases; nobody can do it better, said Clarence Hervey.

But I hope you will remember, dear Lady Delacour, said Belinda, that there is nothing in which novellists are so apt to err as in hurrying things toward the conclusion; in not allowing *time* enough for that change of feeling which change of situation cannot instantly produce.

That's right, my dear Belinda, true to your principles to the last gasp. Fear nothing—you shall have *time* enough to become accustomed to Clarence. Would you choose that I should draw out the story to five volumes more? With your advice and assistance, I can, with the greatest ease, my dear.—A declaration of love, you know, is only the beginning of things; there may be blushes, and sighs, and doubts, and fears, and misunderstandings, and jealousies without end or common sense, to fill up the necessary space, and to gain the necessary *time*; but if I might conclude the business in two lines, I should say,

Ye gods, annihilate both space and time,
And make four lovers happy.

O, that would be cutting matters too short, said Mrs. Margaret Delacour. I am of the old school; and though I could dispense with the description of Miss Harriet Byron's worked chairs and fine

china, yet I own I like to hear something of the preparation for a marriage, as well as of the mere wedding. I like to hear *how* people become happy in a rational manner, better than to be told in the huddled style of an old fairy tale—and so they were all married, and they lived very happily all the rest of their days.

We are not in much danger of hearing such an account of modern marriages, said Lady Delacour—But how shall I please you all?—Some people cry—‘Tell me every thing’—others say, that

Le secret d'ennuyer est celui de tout dire.

Something must be left to the imagination. Positively, I will not describe wedding-dresses, or a procession to church. I have no objection to saying that the happy couples were united by the worthy Mr. Moreton; that Mr. Percival gave Belinda away; and that immediately after the ceremony he took the whole party down with him to Oakly Park.—Will this do?—Or we may conclude, if you like it better, with a characteristic letter of congratulation from Mrs. Stanhope to her *dearest* niece, Belinda, acknowledging that she was wrong to quarrel with her for refusing Sir Philip Baddely, and giving her infinite credit for that admirable *management* of Clarence Hervey, which she hopes will continue through life.

Well, I have no objection to ending with a letter, said Mrs. Delacour, for last speeches are always tiresome.

Yes, said her ladyship; it is so difficult, as the critic says, to get lovers off upon their knees. Now I think of it, let me place you all in proper attitudes for stage effect. What signifies being happy unless we appear so?—Captain Sunderland—kneel—



THE
MODERN GRISELDA.

CHAPTER I.

Bless'd as the immortal gods is he,
The youth who fondly sits by thee,
Who sees, and hears thee all the while,
Softly speak and sweetly smile,

Is not this ode set to music, my dear Griselda?
said the happy bridegroom to his bride.

Yes, surely, my dear, did you never hear it?

Never, and I am glad of it, for I shall have the
pleasure of hearing it for the first time, from you,
my love—Will you be so kind as to play it for me?

Most willingly said Griselda, with an enchant-
ing smile; but I am afraid that I shall not be able
to do it justice, added she, as she sat down to her
harp, and threw her white arm across the chords.

Charming! Thank you, my love, said the bride-
groom, who had listened with enthusiastic devotion
—Will you let me hear it once more?

The complaisant bride repeated the strain.

Thank you, my dear love, repeated her husband.
This time he omitted the word '*charming*'—She
missed it, and pouting prettily, said,

I never can play any thing so well the second

time as the first—She paused: but as no compliment ensued, she continued in a more pettish tone—And for that reason, I do hate to be made to play any thing twice over.

I did not know that, my dearest love, or I would not have asked you to do it; but I am the more obliged to you for your ready compliance.

Obliged!—Oh, my dear, I am sure you could not be the least obliged to me, for I know I played it horridly; I hate flattery.

I am convinced of that, my dear, and therefore I never flatter: you know I did not say that you played as well the last time as the first, did I?

No, I did not say you did, cried Griselda, and her colour rose as she spoke; she tuned her harp with some precipitation—This harp is terribly out of tune.

Is it? I did not perceive it.

Did not you indeed? I am sorry for that.

Why so, my dear?

Because, my dear, I own that I would rather have had the blame thrown on my harp than upon myself.

Blame! my love!—But I threw no blame either on you or your harp. I cannot recollect saying even a syllable that implied blame.

No, my dear, you did not *say* a syllable; but in some cases the silence of those we love is the worst, the most mortifying species of blame.

The tears came into Griselda's beautiful eyes.

My sweet love, said he, how can you let such a trifle affect you so much?

Nothing is a trifle to me which concerns those I love, said Griselda.—Her husband kissed away the pearly drops which rolled over her vermeil-tinctured cheeks. My love, said he, this is having too much sensibility.

Yes, I own I have too much sensibility, said she, too much, a great deal too much for my own happiness—nothing ever can be a trifle to me, which marks the decline of the affection of those who are most dear to me.

The tenderest protestations of undiminished and unalterable affection could not for some time reassure this timid sensibility; but at length the lady suffered herself to be comforted, and with a languid smile said, that she hoped she was mistaken—that her fears were perhaps unreasonable—that she prayed to heaven they might in future prove groundless.

A few weeks afterwards her husband unexpectedly met with Mr. Granby, a friend, of whose company he was particularly fond; he invited him home to dinner, and was talking over past times in all the gaiety and innocence of his heart, when suddenly his wife rose and left the room.—As her absence appeared to him long, and as he had begged his friend to postpone *an excellent story* till her return, he went to her apartment and called Griselda!—Griselda, my love!—No Griselda answered—he searched for her in vain in every room in the house—at last in an alcove in the garden he found the fair dissolved in tears——

Good heavens! my dear Griselda, what can be the matter?

A melancholy, not to say sullen silence was maintained by his dear Griselda, till this question had been reiterated in all the possible tones of fond solicitude and alarm: at last in broken sentences she replied——

That she saw he did not love her—never had loved her—that she had now but too much reason to be convinced that all her fears were real, not

imaginary. That her presentiments, alas! never deceived her! That she was the most miserable woman on earth.

Her husband's unfeigned astonishment she seemed to consider as an aggravation of her woes, and it was an additional insult to plead ignorance of his offence.

If he did not understand her feelings, it was impossible, it was needless to explain them. He must have lost all sympathy with her—all tenderness for her, if he did not know what had passed in her mind.

The man stood in stupid innocence: provoked to speak more plainly, the lady exclaimed,

Unfeeling! cruel! barbarous man!—Have not you this whole day been trying your utmost skill to torment me to death? And, proud of your success, now you come to enjoy your triumph.

Success!—Triumph!

Yes, triumph!—I see it in your eyes—it is in vain to deny it—all this I owe to your friend Mr. Granby:—why he should be my enemy, I! who never injured him, or any body living, in thought, word, or deed—why he should be my enemy!—

Enemy! my love, this is the strangest fancy! Why should you imagine that he is your enemy?

He is my enemy, nobody shall ever convince me of the contrary; he has wounded me in the tenderest point, and in the basest manner; has not he done his utmost, in the most artful, insidious way, even before my face, to persuade you that you were a thousand times happier when you were a bachelor than you are now—than you ever have been since you married me?

O my dear Griselda! you totally misunderstand him, such a thought never entered his mind.

Pardon me, I know him better than you do.

But I have known him ever since I was a child.

That is the very reason you cannot judge of him as well as I can—how could you judge of character when you were a child?

But now that I am a man—

Now that you are a man you are prejudiced in his favour by all the associations of your childhood—all those associations, continued the fair one, renewing her tears, all those early associations, which are stronger than every other species of affection—all those associations, which I never *can* have in your mind, which ever must act against me, and which no merit, if I had any merit, no tenderness, no fidelity, no fondness of mine can ever hope to balance in the heart of the man I love.

My dearest Griselda! be reasonable, and do not torment yourself and me for no earthly purpose about these associations—really it is ridiculous; come, dry these useless tears, let me beseech you, my love. You do not know how much pain they give me, unreasonable as they are.

At these words they flowed more bitterly.

Nay, my love, I conjure you to compose yourself, and return to the company; you do not know how long you have been away, and I too; we shall be missed, we shall make ourselves ridiculous.

If it be ridiculous to love, I shall be ridiculous all my life; I am sorry you think me so, I knew it would come to this, I must bear it, if I can, said Griselda—only be so kind to excuse me from returning to the company to-night, indeed I am not fit, I am not able; say that I am not well; indeed, my love, you may so with truth—tell your friend that I have a terrible head-ache, and that I am gone to bed; but not to rest, added she in a lower and more plaintive tone as she drew her hand from her hus-

band's, and in spite of all his entreaties retired to her room, with an air of heart-broken resignation.

Whoever has had the felicity to be beloved by such a wife as our Griselda, must have felt how much the charms of beauty are heightened by the anguish of sensibility—even in the moment when a husband is most tormented by her caprices, he feels that there is something so amiable, so flattering to his vanity in their source, that he cannot complain of the killing pleasure. On the contrary, he grows fonder of his dear tormentor; he folds closer to him this pleasing bosom ill.

Griselda perceived the effects, and felt the whole extent of the power of sensibility; she had too much prudence, however, at once to wear out the excitability of a husband's heart, she knew that the influence of tears, potent as it is, might in time cease to be irresistible, unless aided by the magic of smiles; she knew the power of contrast even in charms; she believed the poets, who certainly understand these things, and who assure us that the very existence of love depends on this blessed vicissitude. Convinced, or seemingly convinced of the folly of that fond melancholy in which she persisted for a week, she next appeared all radiant with joy; and she had reason to be delighted by the effect which this produced. Her husband, who had not yet been long enough her husband to cease to be her lover, had suffered much from the obstinacy of her sorrow; his spirits had sunk, he had become silent, he had been even seen to stand motionless with his arms folded; he was in this attitude when she approached and smiled upon him in all her glory. He breathed, he lived, he moved, he spoke—Not the influence of the sun on the statue of Memnon was ever more exhilarating.

Let any candid female say, or, if she will not

, imagine, what she should have felt at this moment in Griselda's place—how intoxicating to man vanity to be possessed of such powers of enchantment!—how difficult to refrain from their exercise!—how impossible to believe in their duration!

CHAPTER II.

*Some hope a lover by their faults to win,
As spots on ermine beautify the skin.*

WHEN Griselda thought that her husband had long enough enjoyed his new existence, and that there was danger of his forgetting the taste of sorrow, she changed her tone—One day, when he did not return home exactly at the appointed hour, she received him with a frown; such as would have made even Mars himself recoil, if Mars could have beheld such a frown upon the brow of his Venus.

Dinner has been kept waiting for you this hour, my dear.

I am very sorry for it; but why did you sit, my dear? I am really very sorry I am so late, but (looking at his watch) it is only half past four by me.

It is seven by me.

They presented their watches to each other, he in an apologetical, she in a reproachful, attitude.

I rather think you are too fast, my dear, said the gentleman.

I am very sure you are too slow, my dear, said the lady.

My watch never loses a minute in the four-and-twenty hours, said he.

Nor mine a second, said she.

I have reason to believe I am right, my love, said the husband mildly.

Reason! exclaimed the wife astonished.

What reason can you possibly have to believe you are right, when I tell you, I am morally certain you are wrong, my love?

My only reason for doubting it is, that I set my watch by the sun to-day.

The sun must be wrong then, cried the lady hastily—You need not laugh; for I know what I am saying—the variation, the declination, must be allowed for in computing it with the clock. Now you know perfectly well what I mean, though you will not explain it for me, because you are conscious I am in the right.

Well, my dear, if *you* are conscious of it, that is sufficient—We will not dispute any more about such a trifle.

Are they bringing up dinner?

If they know that you are come in; but I am sure I cannot tell whether they do or not—Pray, my dear Mrs. Nettleby, cried the lady, turning to a female friend, and still holding her watch in hand, what o'clock is it by you? There is nobody in the world hates disputing about trifles so much as I do; but I own I do love to convince people that I am in the right.

Mrs. Nettleby's watch had stopped—How provoking! Vexed at having no immediate means of convincing people that she was in the right, our heroine consoled herself by proceeding to criminate her husband, not in this particular instance

where he pleaded guilty, but upon the general charge of being always late for dinner, which he strenuously denied.

There is something in the species of reproach, which advances thus triumphantly from particulars to generals, peculiarly offensive to every reasonable and susceptible mind: and there is something in the general charge of being always late for dinner, which the punctuality of man's nature cannot easily endure, especially if he be hungry. We should humbly advise our female friends to forbear exposing a husband's patience to this trial, or at least to temper it with much fondness, else mischief will infallibly ensue. For the first time Griselda saw her husband angry; but she recovered him by saying, in a softened tone——

My love, you must be sensible that I can have but one reason for being so impatient for your return home—If I liked your company less, I should not complain so much of your want of punctuality.

Finding that this speech had the desired effect, it was afterwards repeated with variations, whenever her husband staid from home to enjoy any species of amusement, or to gratify any of his friends. When he betrayed symptoms of impatience under this constraint, the expostulations became more urgent, if not more forcible.

Indeed, my dear, I take it rather unkindly of you, that you pay so little attention to my feelings——

I see I am of no consequence to you now; I find every body's society is preferred to mine; it was not always so—Well! it is what I might have expected——

Heigho!——Heigho!——

Griselda's sighs were still persuasive, and her

husband, notwithstanding that he felt the restraints which daily multiplied upon his time, and upon his personal liberty, becoming irksome, had not the barbarity to give pain to the woman by whom he was so tenderly beloved: he did not consider that in this case, as well as in many others, apparent mercy is real cruelty. The more this monopolizing humour of his wife's was indulged, the more insatiable it became—every person, every thing but herself, was to be excluded from his heart; and when this solè patent for pleasure was granted to her, she became rather careless in its exercise, as those are apt to do who fear no competitors. In proportion as her endeavours to please abated, her expectations of being adored increased: the slightest word of blame, the most remote hint that any thing in her conduct, manners, or even dress, could be altered for the better, was the signal for battle, or tears.

One night she wept for an hour, and debated for two, about an alteration in her head-dress, which her husband unluckily happened to say made it more becoming. *More becoming!* implied, that it was before unbecoming. She recollected the time when every thing she wore was becoming in somebody's eyes—but that time, alas! was completely past; and she only wished that she could forget that it had ever been.

To have been happy is additional misery.

This misery may appear comic to some people, but it certainly was not so to our heroine's unfortunate husband. It was in vain, that in mitigation of his offence he pleaded total want of knowledge in the arcana of the toilette—absolute inferiority of taste, and a willing submission to the decrees of fashion.

This submission was called indifference—this

ess construed into contempt. He stood conscious of having said that the lady's dress was uninteresting—she was certain that he thought more of her said, and that every thing about her was disagreeable to him.

As in vain he represented that his affection had been created, and could not be annihilated by trifles; that it rested on the solid basis of love.

At last he cried his wife—that is the unkindest of all! When a man begins to talk of esteem is an end of love.

To illustrate this position, the fair one, as well as the disorder of her mind would permit, entered into a refined disquisition full of all the metaphysical gallantry, which proved that love—genuine love is an ethereal essence—a union of souls—united by none of those formal principles, and dependent upon none of those vulgar moral qualities, such as friendship and the other connexions of friendship depend. Far, far above the jurisdiction of friendship, true love creates perfect sympathy in taste, perfect identity of opinion, upon all subjects—physical, metaphysical, moral, political, and domestic. After having thus established her theory, her practice was wonderfully consistent, and was reasonably expected from her husband the most perfect conformity to her principles—of course, his senses and his understanding were to be identical with hers. If he saw, heard, felt, or understood anything differently from her, he did not—could not love her, she was offended by his liking white better than black; at another time she was angry with him for loving the taste of mushrooms. One winter she quarrelled with him for not admiring the softness of satin, and one summer she was jealous for listening to the song of a blackbird.

Then, because he could not prefer to all other odours the smell of jessamine, she was ready 'to die of a rose in aromatic pain.' The domain of taste, in the more enlarged sense of the word, became a glorious field of battle, and afforded subjects of inextinguishable war. Our heroine was accomplished, and knew how to make all her accomplishments and her knowledge of use. As she was mistress not only of the pencil, and of all 'the cant of criticism,' she had infinite advantages in the wordy war. From the *beau ideal* to the choice of a snuffer-dish, all came within her province, and was to be submitted, without appeal, to her instinctive sense of moral order. Happy fruits of knowledge! Happy those, who can thus enlarge their intellectual dominion, and can vary eternally the dear delight of giving pain! The range of opinion was still more ample than the province of taste, affording scope for all the joys of assertion and declamation—for the opposing of learned and unlearned authorities—for the quoting the opinions of friends—counting voices instead of arguments—wondering at the absurdity of those who can be of a different way of thinking—appealing to the judgement of the whole world—or resting perfectly satisfied with her own. Sometimes the most important, sometimes the most trivial, and seemingly uninteresting subjects, gave exercise to Griselda's powers, and in all cases being entirely of her opinion was the only satisfactory proof of love.

Our heroine knew how, with able generalship, to take advantage of time and situation. Just before the birth of their first child a dispute arose between the husband and wife concerning public and private education, which, from its vehemence, alarmed the gentleman into a perfect conviction that he was in the wrong. Scarcely had Griselda gained this point,

when a question arose at the tea-table, respecting the Chinese method of making tea. It was doubted by some of the company whether it was made in a tea-pot or a tea-cup. Griselda gave her opinion loudly for the tea-pot—her lord and master inclined to the tea-cup—and as neither of them had been in China, they could debate without fear of coming to a conclusion. The subject seemed at first insignificant; but the lady's method of managing it supplied all deficiencies, and roused all the passions of human nature on one side or the other. Victory hung doubtful; but our heroine won the day by taking time into the account—her adversary was in a hurry to go to the wedding of one of his friends, and quitted the field of battle.

CHAPTER III.

Self-valuing Fancy, highly-crested Pride,
Strong sovereign Will, and some desire to chide.

'THERE are,' says Dr. Johnson, 'a thousand familiar disputes which reason can never decide; questions that elude investigation, and make logic ridiculous—cases where something must be done, and where little can be said * * * * Wretched would be the pair above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason every morning, all the detail of a domestic day.'

Our heroine made a double advantage of this passage; for she regularly reasoned where logic was ridiculous, and could not be prevailed upon to

listen to reason when it might have been useful—she substituted her *will* most frequently for arguments, and often opposed it to her husband's, in order to give him the merit of sacrificing his wishes. When he wanted to read, she suddenly wished to walk; when he wished to walk, she was immersed in her studies. When he was busy, she was talkative—when he was eager to hear her converse, she was inclined to be silent. The company that he liked, she disliked; the public amusements that she most frequented were those of which he least approved. This species of wilfulness was the strongest proof of her solicitude about his good opinion.—She could not bear, she said, that he should consider her as a child who was not able to govern herself.—She could not believe that a man had confidence in her, unless he proved it by leaving her at liberty to decide and act for herself.

Sometimes she receded, sometimes she advanced in her claims: but without marking the daily ebbs and flows of her humour, it is sufficient to observe, that it continually encroached upon her husband's indulgence—she soon insisted upon being *consulted*, that is obeyed, in affairs which did not immediately come under the cognisance of her sex—politics inclusive. This apparently exorbitant love of power was veiled under the most affectionate humility.

O my love! I know you despise my abilities; you think these things above the comprehension of poor women. I know I am but your plaything after all; you cannot consider me for a moment as your equal or your friend—I see that!—You talk of these things to your friend Mr. Granby—I am not worthy to hear them.—Well, I am sure I have no ambition, except to possess the confidence of the man I love.

The lady forgot that she had, upon a former oc-

casion, considered a profession of esteem from her husband as an insult, and that, according to her definition of true love, esteem was incompatible with its existence.

Tacitus remarks, that it is common with princes to will contradictories; in this characteristic they have the honour to resemble some of the fair sex, as well as all spoiled children. Having every feasible wish gratified, they are obliged to wish for what is impossible, for want of something to desire or to do—they are compelled to cry for the moon, or for new worlds to conquer.—Our heroine having now attained the summit of human glory and happiness, and feeling almost as much *ennui* as was expressed by the conqueror of the world, yawned one morning as she sat *tête-à-tête* with her husband, and said—

I wish I knew what was the matter with me this morning—Why do you keep the newspaper all to yourself, my dear?

Here it is for you, my dear, I have finished it.

I humbly thank you for giving it to me when you have done with it—I hate stale news—Is there any thing in the paper? for I cannot be at the trouble of hunting it.

Yes, my dear, there are the marriages of two of our friends—

Who? Who?

Your friend the widow Nettleby to her cousin John Nettleby.

Mrs. Nettleby! Lord! but why did you tell me?

Because you asked me, my dear.

Oh! but it is a hundred times pleasanter to read the paragraph one's self—one loses all the pleasure of the surprise by being told—Well! whose was the other marriage?

Oh, my dear, I will not tell you—I will leave you the pleasure of the surprise.

But you see I cannot find it—how provoking you are, my dear! Do pray tell it me.

Our friend Mr. Granby.

Mr. Granby!—Dear! Why did not you make me guess? I should have guessed him directly;—but why do you call him our friend? I am sure he is no friend of mine, nor ever was; I took an aversion to him, as you may remember, the very first day I saw him; I am sure he is no friend of mine.

I am sorry for it, my dear—but I hope you will go and see Mrs. Granby.

Not I indeed, my dear—Who was she?

Miss Cooke.

Cooke!—but there are so many Cookes—Can't you distinguish her any way?—Has she no Christian name?

Emma, I think—yes, Emma.

Emma Cooke!—No;—it cannot be my friend Emma Cooke—for I am sure she was cut out for an old maid.

This lady seems to me to be cut out for a good wife—

May be so—I am sure I'll never go to see her—Pray, my dear, how came you to see so much of her?

I have seen very little of her, my dear—I only saw her two or three times before she was married.

Then, my dear, how could you decide that she is cut out for a good wife?—I am sure you could not judge of her by seeing her only two or three times, and before she was married.

Indeed, my love, that is a very just observation.

I understand that compliment perfectly, and thank you for it, my dear—I must own I can bear any thing better than irony.

Irony! my dear, I was perfectly in earnest.

Yes, yes; in earnest—so I perceive—I may naturally be dull of apprehension, but my feelings are quick enough; I comprehend you too well; yes—it is impossible to judge of a woman before marriage, or to guess what sort of a wife she will make. I presume you speak from experience; you have been disappointed yourself, and repent your choice.

My dear, what did I say that was like this?—Upon my word I meant no such thing; I really was not thinking of you in the least.

No—you never think of me now: I can easily believe that you were not thinking of me in the least.

But I said that only to prove to you that I could not be thinking ill of you, my dear.

But I would rather that you thought ill of me, than that you did not think of me at all.

Well, my dear, said her husband laughing, I will even think ill of you, if that will please you.

Do you laugh at me? cried she, bursting into tears. When it comes to this I am wretched indeed! Never man laughed at the woman he loved! As long as you had the slightest remains of love for me, you could not make me an object of derision: ridicule and love are incompatible; absolutely incompatible. Well, I have done my best, my very best, to make you happy, but in vain. I see I am not *cut out* to be a good wife. Happy, happy Mrs. Granby!

Happy, I hope sincerely that she will be, with my friend; but my happiness must depend on you, my love: so for my sake, if not for your own, be

composed, and do not torment yourself with such fancies.

I do wonder, cried our heroine starting from her seat, whether this Mrs. Granby is really that Miss Emma Cooke. I'll go and see her directly; see her I must.

I am heartily glad of it, my dear; for I am sure a visit to his wife will give my friend Granby real pleasure.

I promise you, my dear, I do not go to give him pleasure, or you either; but to satisfy my own—*curiosity*.

The rudeness of this speech would have been intolerable to her husband, if it had not been for a certain hesitation in the emphasis with which she pronounced the word *curiosity*, which left him in doubt as to her real motive.

Jealousy is sometimes thought to be a proof of love; and in this point of view must not all its caprices, absurdities, and extravagancies be graceful, amiable, and gratifying?

A few days after Griselda had satisfied her curiosity, she thus, in the presence of her husband, began to vent her spleen:

For heaven's sake, dear Mrs. Nettleby, cried she, addressing herself to the new-married widow, who came to return her wedding visit;—for pity's sake, dear Mrs. Nettleby, can you or any body else tell me, what possessed Mr. Granby to marry Emma Cooke?

I am sure I cannot tell, for I have not seen her yet.

You will be less able to tell after you have seen her, and less still after you have heard her.

What then, she is neither a wit nor a beauty! I'm quite surprised at that; for I thought, to be

sure, Mr. Granby, who is such a judge and such a critic, and so nice about female manners, would not have been content without something very extraordinary.

Nothing can be more ordinary.

Astonishing! but I am quite tired of being astonished at marriages! One sees such strange matches every day, I am resolved never to be surprised at any thing: who *can*, that lives in the world? But really now I am surprised at Mr. Granby. What! is she nothing?

Nothing: absolutely nothing: a cipher: a non-entity.

Now really? you do not tell me so, said Mrs. Nettleby: well, I am so disappointed; for I always resolved to take example by Mr. Granby's wife.

I would rather that she should take warning by me, said Griselda laughing: but to be candid, I must tell you, that to some people's taste she is a pattern-wife; a perfect Grizzle. She and I should have changed names—or characters! Which, my dear? cried she, appealing to her husband.

Not names, my dear, answered he.

The conversation might here have ended happily; but unluckily our heroine could not be easily satisfied before Mrs. Nettleby, to whom she was proud of showing her conjugal ascendancy.

My dear, said she to her husband, *à propos* to pattern-wives; you have read Chaucer's Tales. Do you seriously like or dislike the real, original, old Griselda?

It is so long since I have seen her, that I cannot tell, replied he.

Then, my dear, you must read the story over again, and tell me without evasion.

And if he could read it before Mrs. Granby and me, what a compliment that would be to one bride,

added the malicious Mrs. Nettleby; and what a lesson for another!

O it must be so! it must be so! cried Griselda. I will ask her here on purpose to a reading party; and you, my dear Mrs. Nettleby, will come for your lesson. You, my love, who read so well; and who, I am sure, will be delighted to pay a compliment to your favourite, Mrs. Granby,—you will read, and I will—weep. On what day shall it be? Let me see: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, I'm engaged: but Sunday is only a card-party at home; I can put that off: then Sunday let it be.

Sunday, I am unluckily engaged, my dear, said her husband.

Engaged! O nonsense! You have no engagements of any consequence; and when I put off a *card-party* on purpose to have the pleasure of hearing you read; oblige me my love, for once.

My love, to oblige you I will do any thing.

Griselda cast a triumphant glance at Mrs. Nettleby, which said as plainly as a look could say, You see how I rule him!

CHAPTER IV.

Feels every vanity in fondness lost,
And asks no power but that of pleasing most.

ON Sunday evening a large company assembled at our heroine's summons. They were all seated in due form; the reader with his book open, and waiting for the arrival of the bride, for whom a conspi-

cuous place was destined, where the spectators, and especially Mrs. Nettleby and our Griselda, could enjoy a full view of her countenance.

Lord bless me! it is getting late; I am afraid—I am really afraid Mrs. Granby will not come.

The ladies had time to discuss who and what she was: as she had lived in the country, few of them had seen or could tell any thing about her; but our heroine circulated her opinion in whispers, and every one was prepared to laugh at the *pattern-wife*, the original *Griselda revived*, as Mrs. Nettleby sarcastically called her.

Mrs. Granby was announced. The buz was hushed, and the titter suppressed; affected gravity appeared in every countenance, and all eyes turned with malicious curiosity upon the bride as she entered. The timidity of Emma's first appearance was so free both from awkwardness and affectation, that it interested at least every gentleman present in her favour. Surrounded by strangers, but quite unsuspecting that they were prepared to consider her as an object of ridicule or satire, she won her way to the lady of the house, to whom she addressed herself as to a friend.

Is not she quite a different person from what you had expected? whispered one of the ladies to her neighbour as Emma passed. Her manner seemed to solicit indulgence rather than to provoke envy. She was very sorry to find that the company had been waiting for her; she had been detained by the sudden illness of Mr. Granby's mother.

Whilst Emma was making this apology, some of the audience observed, that she had a remarkably sweet voice; others discovered that there was something extremely feminine in her person. A gentleman, who saw that she was distressed at the idea of being seated in the conspicuous place to which

she was destined by the lady of the house, got up, and offered his seat, which she most thankfully accepted.

Oh, my dear Mrs. Granby, I cannot possibly allow you to sit there, cried the lady of the house. You must have the honours of the day, added she, seizing Emma's hand to conduct her to the *place of honour*. Pray excuse me, said Mrs. Granby, honours are so little suited to me: I am perfectly well here.

But with that window *at your back*, my dear madam! said Mrs. Nettleby.

I do not feel the slightest breath of air. But perhaps I crowd these ladies?

Not in the least, not in the least, said the ladies who were on each side of her; they were won by the irresistible gentleness of Emma's manner. Our heroine was vexed to be obliged to give up her point; and relinquishing Mrs. Granby's hand, returned to her own seat, and said in a harsh tone to her husband—

Well! my dear, if we are to have any reading to-night, you had better begin.

The reading began, and Emma was so completely absorbed, that she did not perceive that most of the audience were intent upon her. Those who act any part may be ridiculous in the playing it, but those are safe from the utmost malignity of criticism who are perfectly unconscious that they have any part to perform. Emma had been abashed at her first appearance in an assembly of strangers, and concerned by the idea that she had kept them waiting; but as soon as this embarrassment passed over, her manners resumed their natural ease; a degree of ease which surprised her judges, and which arose from the persuasion, that she was not of sufficient consequence to attract attention. Our heroine was provoked by the sight of this insolent tranquillity,

and was determined that it should not long continue. The reader came to the promise which Gualtherus exacts from his bride :

Swear that with ready will and honest heart,
Like or dislike, without regret or art;
In presence or alone, by night or day,
All that I will you fail not to obey;
All I intend to forward that you seek,
Nor ever once object to what I speak.
Nor yet in part alone my wish fulfil;
Nor, though you do it, do it with ill-will;
Nor with a forc'd compliance half refuse;
And acting duty all the merit lose.
To strict obedience add a willing grace,
And let your soul be painted in your face;
No reasons giv'n, and no pretences sought,
To swerve in deed, or word, in look, or thought.

Well, ladies ! cried the modern Griselda ; what do you think of this ?

Shrill exclamations of various vehemence expressed with one accord the sentiments, or rather feelings, of almost all the married ladies who were present.

Abominable ! intolerable ! insufferable ! horrible ! I would rather have seen the man perish at my feet ! I would rather have died ! I would have remained unmarried all my life, rather than have submitted to such terms.

A few young unmarried ladies who had not spoken, or who had not been heard to speak in the din of tongues, were appealed to by the gentlemen next them. They could not be prevailed upon to pronounce any distinct opinion ; they qualified, and hesitated, and softened, and equivocated, and were not positively able to judge, for really they had never thought upon the subject.

Upon the whole, however, it was evident, that they did not betray that natural horror which per-

vaded the more experienced matrons. All agreed that the terms were hard terms and ill-expressed; some added, that only love could persuade a woman to submit to them. And some still more sentimental maidens, in a lower voice, were understood to say, that as nothing is impossible to Cupid, they might be induced to such submission; but that it must be by a degree of love, which they solemnly declared they had never felt or could imagine, as yet.

For my part, cried the modern Griselda, I would sooner have lived an old maid to the days of Methusalem than have been so mean as to have married any man on earth upon such terms. But I know there are people who can never think marriage dear bought. My dear Mrs. Granby, we have not yet heard your opinion, and we should have had yours first, as bride.

I forgot that I was bride, said Emma.

Forgot! is it possible! cried Mrs. Nettleby; now this is an excess of modesty of which I have no notion.

But for which Mr. Granby, continued our heroine, turning to Mr. Granby, who at this moment entered the room, ought to make his best bow. Here is your lady, sir, who has just assured us that she forgot she was a bride; bow to this exquisite humility.

Exquisite vanity! cried Mr. Granby, she knows

How much the wife is dearer than the bride.

She will be a singularly happy woman if she knows that this time twelvemonth, replied our heroine, darting a reproachful look at her silent husband. In the mean time, do let us hear Mrs. Granby speak for herself; I must have her opinion of Griselda's promise to obey her lord right or wrong, in all things, no reasons given, to submit in deed, and word, and look, and thought. If Mrs. Granby

tells us that is her theory, we must all reform our practice.

Every eye was fixed upon Emma, and every ear was impatient for her answer.

I should never have imagined, said she smiling, that any person's practice could be influenced by my theory, especially as I have no theory.

No more humility, my dear; if you have no theory, you have an opinion of your own, I hope, and we must have a distinct answer to this simple question—Would you have made the promise that was required from Griselda?

No, answered Emma distinctly, no; for I could never have loved or esteemed the man who required such a promise.

Disconcerted by this answer, which was the very reverse of what she expected, amazed at the modest self-possession with which the timid Emma spoke, and vexed by the symptoms of approbation which Emma's words and voice excited, our heroine called upon her husband, in a more than usually authoritative tone, and bid him—read on.

He obeyed: Emma became again absorbed in the story, and her countenance showed how much she felt all its beauties, and all its pathos. Emma did all she could to repress her feelings; and our heroine all she could to make her and them ridiculous. But in this attempt she was unsuccessful; for many of the spectators, who at her instigation began by watching Emma's countenance to find subject for ridicule, ended by sympathizing with her unaffected sensibility.

When the tale was ended, the modern Griselda, who was determined to oppose as strongly as possible the charms of spirit to those of sensibility, burst furiously forth into an invective against the

meanness of her namesake, and the tyranny of the odious Gualtherus.

Could you have forgiven him, Mrs. Granby? could you have forgiven the monster?

He repented, said Emma; and does not a penitent cease to be a monster?

O, I never, never would have forgiven him, penitent or not penitent; I would not have forgiven him such sins.

I would not have put it into his power to commit them, said Emma.

I confess the story never touched me in the least, cried Mrs. Bolingbroke.

Perhaps for the same reason that Petrarch's friend said that he read it unmoved, replied Mrs. Granby; because he could not believe that such a woman as Grise!da ever existed.

No, no, not for that reason; I believe many such poor, meek, mean-spirited creatures exist.

Emma was at length awakened to the perception of her friend's envy and jealousy; but—

She mild forgave the failing of her sex.

I cannot admire the original Griselda, or any of her imitators, continued our heroine.

There is no great danger of her finding imitators in these days, said Mr. Granby. Had Chaucer lived in our enlightened times, he would doubtless have drawn a very different character.

The modern Griselda looked 'fierce as ten furies.' Emma softened her husband's observation by adding, that allowance should certainly be made for poor Chaucer, if we consider the times in which he wrote. The situation and understandings of women have been so much improved since his days. Women were then slaves, now they are free. My

dear, whispered she to her husband, your mother is not well, shall we go home?

Emma left the room; and even Mrs. Nettleby, after she was gone, said,

Really she is not ugly when she blushes.

No woman is ugly when she blushes, replied our heroine; but, unluckily, a woman cannot *always* blush.

Finding that her attempt to make Emma ridiculous had failed, and that it had really placed Mrs. Granby's understanding, manners, and temper, in a most advantageous and amiable light; Griselda was mortified beyond measure: she could scarcely bear to hear Emma's name mentioned.

CHAPTER V.

She that can please is certain to persuade,
To-day is lov'd, to-morrow is obey'd.

A FEW days after the reading party, Griselda was invited to spend an evening at Mrs. Granby's.

I shall not go, said she, throwing down the card with an air of disdain.

I shall go, said her husband calmly.

You will go, my dear! cried she, amazed; you will go without *me*?

Not without you, if you will be so kind as to go with me, my love, said he.

It is quite out of my power, said she; I am engaged to my friend Mrs. Nettleby.

Very well, my dear, said he; do as you please.

Certainly I shall. And I am surprised, my dear, that you do not go to see Mr. John Nettleby.

I have no desire to see him, my dear. He is, as I have often heard you say, an obstinate fool. He is a man I dislike particularly.

Very possibly, but you ought to go to see him notwithstanding.

Why so, my dear?

Because he is married to a woman I like. If you had any regard for me, your own feelings would have saved you the trouble of asking that question.

But, my dear, should not your regard for me also suggest to you the propriety of keeping up an acquaintance with Mrs. Granby, who is married to a man I like; and who is not herself an obstinate fool?

I shall not enter into any discussion upon the subject, replied our heroine, for this was one of the cases where she made it a rule never to reason. I can only say, that I have my own opinion, and that I beg to be excused from keeping up any acquaintance whatever with Mrs. Granby.

And I beg to be excused from keeping up any acquaintance whatever with Mr. Nettleby, replied her husband.

Good heavens! cried she, raising herself upon the sofa on which she had been reclining, and fixing her eyes upon her husband with unfeigned astonishment; I do not know you this morning, my dear.

Possibly not, my dear, replied he; for hitherto you have seen only your lover, now you see your husband.

Never did metamorphosis excite more astonishment. The lady was utterly unconscious that she had had any part in producing it, that she had herself dissolved the spell. She raged, she raved, she

reasoned in vain. Her point she could not compass. Her cruel husband persisted in his determination not to go to see Mr. John Nettleby. Absolutely astounded, she was silent. There was a truce for some hours. She renewed the attack in the evening, and ceased not hostilities for three succeeding days and nights, in reasonable hopes of wearying the enemy, still without success. The morning rose, 'the great, the important day,' which was to decide the fate of the visit. The contending parties met as usual at breakfast; they seemed mutually afraid of each other, and stood at bay. There was a forced calm in the gentleman's demeanour, treacherous smiles played upon the lady's countenance. He seemed cautious to prolong the suspension of hostilities, she fond to anticipate the victory. The name of Mrs. Granby, or of Mr. John Nettleby, was not uttered by either party, nor did either inquire where the other was to spend the evening. At dinner they met again, and preserved on this delicate subject a truly diplomatic silence, whilst on the topics foreign to their thoughts they talked with admirable fluency: actuated by as sincere desire, as ever was felt by negotiating politicians, to establish peace on the broadest basis, they were, *with the most perfect consideration*, each other's devoted and most obedient humble servants. Candour, however, obliges us to confess, that though the deference on the part of the gentleman was the most unqualified and praiseworthy, the lady was superior in her inimitable air of frank cordiality. The *volto sciolto* was in her favour, the *pensieri stretti* in his. Any one but an ambassador would have been deceived by the husband; any one but a woman would have been duped by the wife. So stood affairs, when, after dinner, the high and mighty powers separated. The lady retired to her toilette. The

gentleman remained with his bottle. He drank a glass of wine extraordinary. She staid half an hour more than usual at her mirror. Arrayed for battle, our heroine repaired to the drawing-room, which she expected to find unoccupied ;—the enemy had taken the field.

Dressed, my dear ! said he.

Ready, my love ! said she.

Shall I ring the bell for your carriage, my dear ? said the husband.

If you please, You go with me, my dear ? said the wife.

I do not know where you are going, my love.

To Mrs. Nettleby's, of course ; and you—

To Mrs. Granby's.

The lightning flashed from Griselda's eyes ere he had half pronounced the words. The lightning flashed without effect.

To Mrs. Granby's ! cried she in a thundering tone. To Mrs. Granby's ! echoed he :—she fell back on the sofa, and a shower of tears ensued. Her husband walked up and down the room, rang again for the carriage, ordered it in the tone of a master, then hummed a tune. The fair one sobbed ; he continued to sing but was out in the time. The lady's sobs grew alarming, and threatened hysterics. He threw open the window, and approached the sofa on which she lay. She, half recovering, unclasped one bracelet ; in haste to get the other off he broke it. The footman came in to announce that the carriage was at the door. She relapsed, and seemed in danger of suffocation from her pearl necklace, which she made a faint effort to loosen from her neck.

Send your lady's woman instantly, cried Griselda's husband to the footman.

Our heroine made another attempt to untie her

necklace, and looked up towards her husband with supplicating eyes. His hands trembled; he entangled the strings. It would have been all over with him if the maid had not at this instant come to his assistance. To her he resigned his perilous post; retreated precipitately; and before the enemy's forces could rally, gained his carriage, and carried his point.

To Mr. Granby's, cried he triumphantly. Arrived there, he hurried to Mr. Granby's room.

Another such victory, cried he, throwing himself into an arm-chair; another such victory, and I am undone.

He related all that had just passed between him and his wife.

Another such combat, said his friend, and you are at peace for life.

We hope that our readers will not from this speech be induced to consider Mr. Granby as an instigator of quarrels between man and wife; or, according to the plebeian, but expressive apophthegm, one who would come between the bark and the tree. On the contrary, he was most desirous to secure his friend's domestic happiness; and, if possible, to prevent the bad effects which were likely to ensue from excessive indulgence and inordinate love of dominion. He had a high respect for our heroine's powers, and thought that they wanted only to be well managed. The same force which, ill directed, bursts the engine and scatters destruction, obedient to the master-hand, answers a thousand useful purposes, and works with easy, smooth, and graceful regularity. Griselda's husband, or, as he now deserves to have his name mentioned, Mr. Bolingbroke, roused by his friend's representations, and perhaps by a sense of approaching danger, re-

solved to assume the guidance of his wife, or at least of himself. In opposition to his sovereign lady's will, he actually spent this evening as he pleased.

CHAPTER VI.

*E sol quei giorni io mi vidi contenta.
C'haverla compiaciuto mi trovai.*

You are a great deal more courageous than I am, my dear, said Emma to her husband, after Mr. Bollingbroke had left them. I should be very much afraid of interfering between your friend and his wife.

What is friendship, said Mr. Granby, if it will run no risks? I must run the hazard of being called a mischief-maker.

That is not the danger of which I was thinking, said Emma; though I confess that I should be weak enough to fear that a little; but what I meant to express was, an apprehension of our doing harm where we most wish to do good.

Do you, my dear Emma, think Griselda incorrigible?

No, indeed, cried Emma with anxious emphasis, far from it: but, without thinking a person incorrigible, may we not dislike the idea of inflicting correction? I should be very sorry to be the means of giving Griselda any pain; she was my friend when we were children; I have a real regard for her; and if she does not now seem disposed to love me, that must be my fault, not hers: or if it is not my fault,

call it my misfortune. At all events, I have no right to force myself upon her acquaintance. She prefers Mrs. Nettleby ; I have not the false humility to say, that I think Mrs. Nettleby will prove as safe or as good a friend as I hope I should be. But of this, Mrs. Bolingbroke has a right to judge. And I am sure, far from resenting her resolution to avoid my acquaintance, my only feeling about it at this instant is, the dread that it should continue to be a matter of dispute between her and her husband.

If Mr. Bolingbroke insisted, or if I advised him to insist, upon his wife's coming here when she does not like it, said Mr. Granby, I should act absurdly, and he would act unjustly ; but all that he requires is equality of rights, and the liberty of going where he pleases. She refuses to come to see you ; he refuses to go to see Mr. John Nettleby. Which has the best of the battle ?

Emma thought it would be best if there were no battle, and observed, that refusals and reprisals would only irritate the parties whose interest and happiness it was to be pacified and to agree. She said, that if Mr. Bolingbroke, instead of opposing his will to that of his wife, which in fact was only conquering force by force, would speak reasonably to her, probably she might be induced to yield, or to command her temper. Mrs. Granby suggested, that a compromise, founded on an offer of mutual sacrifice and mutual compliance, might be obtained. That Mr. Bolingbroke might promise to give up some of his time to the man he disliked, upon condition that Griselda should submit to the society of a woman to whom she had an aversion.

If she consented to this, said Emma, I would do my best to make her like me ; or at least to make her time pass agreeably at our house : her liking me is a matter of no manner of consequence.

Emma was capable of putting herself entirely out of the question when the interest of others was at stake; her whole desire was to conciliate, and all her thoughts were intent upon making her friends happy. She seemed to live in them more than in herself, and from sympathy arose the greatest pleasure and pain of her existence. Her sympathy was not of that useless kind, which is called forth only by the elegant fictitious sorrows of a heroine of romance; hers was ready for all the occasions of real life; nor was it to be easily checked by the imperfections of those to whom she could be of service. At this moment, when she perceived that her husband was disgusted by Griselda's caprice, she said all she could think of in her favour: she recollected every anecdote of Griselda's childhood which showed an amiable disposition; and argued, that it was not probable her temper should have entirely changed in a few years. Emma's quick-sighted good-nature could discern the least portion of merit where others could find only faults; as certain experienced eyes can discover grains of gold in the sands, which the ignorant have searched and abandoned as useless. In consequence of Emma's advice, (for who would reject good advice offered with so much gentleness?) Mr. Granby wrote a note to Mr. Bolingbroke, to recommend the compromise which she had suggested. Upon his return home, Mr. Bolingbroke was informed that his lady had gone to bed much indisposed: he spent a restless night, notwithstanding all his newly-acquired magnanimity. He was much relieved in the morning by his friend's note, and blessed Emma for proposing the compromise.

CHAPTER VII.

Each widow to her secret friend alone.
Whispered ; Thus treated, he had had his own

MR. BOLINGBROKE waited with impatience for Griselda's appearance the next morning, but he waited in vain : the lady breakfasted in her own apartment, and for two hours afterwards remained in close consultation with Mrs. Nettleby, whom she had summoned the preceding night by the following note :

‘ I HAVE been prevented from spending this evening with you, my dearest Mrs. Nettleby, by the strangest conduct imaginable : I am sure you will not believe it when I tell it to you. Come to me, I conjure you, as early to-morrow as you possibly can, that I may explain to you all that has past, and consult as to the future. My dearest friend, I never was so much in want of an adviser. Ever yours,

‘ GRISELDA.’

At this consultation Mrs. Nettleby expressed the utmost astonishment at Mr. Bolingbroke's strange conduct, and assured Griselda, that if she did not exert herself all was lost, and she must give up the hopes of ever having her own way again as long as she lived.

My dear, said she, I have had some experience in these things ; a wife must be either a tyrant or a slave : make your choice ; now is your time.

But I never knew him say or do any thing unkind before, said Griselda.

Then the first offence should be properly resented. If he finds you forgiving, he will become encroaching; 'tis the nature of man, depend upon it.

He always yielded to me till now, said Griselda; but even when I was ready to go into fits, he left me: and what could I do then?

You astonish me beyond expression! You who have every advantage! youth, wit, accomplishments, beauty! My dear, if you cannot keep a husband's heart, who can ever hope to succeed?

Oh! as to his heart, I have no doubts of his heart, to do him justice, said Griselda; I know he loves me—passionately loves me.

And yet you cannot manage him! And you expect me to pity you? Bless me, if I had half your advantages, what I would make of them! But if you like to be a tame wife, my dear, if you are resolved upon it, tell me so at once, and I will hold my tongue.

I do not know well what I am resolved upon, said Griselda, leaning her head in a melancholy posture upon her hand; I am vexed, out of spirits, and out of sorts.

Out of sorts! I am not surprised at that: but out of spirits! My dear creature, you who have every thing to put you in spirits. I am never so much *myself*, as when I have a quarrel to fight out.

I cannot say that is the case with me, unless where I am sure of the victory.

And it is your own fault, if you are not always sure of it.

I thought so till last night; but I assure you last night he showed such a spirit!

Break that spirit, my dear, break it, or else it will break your heart.

The alternative is terrible, said Griselda, and more probable perhaps than you could imagine, or I either till now: for, would you believe it? I never loved him in my life half so well as I did last night in the midst of my anger, and when he was doing every thing to provoke me.

Very natural, my dear; because you saw him behave with spirit, and you love spirit; so does every woman; so does every body: show him that you have spirit to, and he will be as angry as you were, and love you as well in the midst of his anger, whilst you are doing every thing to provoke him.

Griselda appeared determined to take this good advice one moment, and the next hesitated.

But, my dear Mrs. Nettleby, did you always find this succeed yourself?

Yes, always.

This lady had the reputation indeed of having broken the heart of her first husband; how she would manage her second, was yet to be seen, as her honeymoon was but just over. The pure love of mischief was not her only motive in the advice which she gave to our heroine; she had, like most people, mixed motives for her conduct. She disliked Mr. Bolingbroke, because he disliked her; yet she wished that an acquaintance should be kept up between him and her husband, because Mr. Bolingbroke was a man of fortune and fashion.

Griselda promised that she would behave with that proper spirit, which was to make her at once amiable and victorious; and the friends parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

With patient, meek, submissive mind,
To her hard fate resign'd,

POTTER'S ÆSCHYLUS.

LEFT to her own good genius, Griselda reflected that novelty has the most powerful effect upon the heart of man. In all the variations of her humour, her husband had never yet seen her in the sullen mood; and in this, she now sat prepared to receive him. He came with an earnest desire to speak to her in the kindest and most reasonable manner. He began by saying, how much it had cost him to give her one moment's uneasiness; his voice, his look, were those of truth and love.

Unmoved Griselda, without raising her leaden eyes, answered in a cold voice,

I am very sorry that you should have felt *any* concern upon my account.

Any! my love, you do not know how *much* I have felt this night.

She looked upon him with civil disbelief: and replied, that she was sure she ought to be much obliged to him.

This frigid politeness repressed his affection: he was silent for some moments.

My dear Griselda, said he, this is not the way in which we should live together; we who have every thing that can make us contented; do not let us throw away our happiness for trifles not worth thinking of.

If we are not happy, it is not my fault, said Griselda.

We will not inquire whose fault it is, my dear, let the blame rest upon me; let the past be forgotten; let us look towards the future. In future, let us avoid childish altercations, and live like reasonable creatures. I have the highest opinion of your sex in general, and of you in particular; I wish to live with my wife as my equal, my friend: I do not desire that my will should govern; where our inclinations differ, let reason decide between us; or where it is a matter not worth reasoning about, let us alternately yield to one another. He paused.

I do not desire or expect that you should ever henceforward yield to my wishes, either in trifles or in matters of consequence, replied Griselda with provoking meekness; you have taught me my duty: the duty of a wife is to submit: and submit I hope I shall in future, without reply or reasoning, to your sovereign will and pleasure.

Nay, my dear, said he, do not treat me as a brutal tyrant, when I wish to do every thing in my power to make you happy. Use your own excellent understanding, and I shall always, I hope, be inclined to yield to your reasons.

I shall never trouble you with my reasons; I shall never use my own understanding in the least: I know that men cannot bear understanding in women; I shall always, as it is my duty, submit to your better judgement.

But, my love, I do not require duty from you; this sort of blind submission would be mortifying instead of gratifying to me from a wife.

I do not know what a wife can do to satisfy a husband, if submitting in every thing be not sufficient.

I say it would be too much for me, my dearest love!

I can do nothing but submit, repeated the perverse Griselda with a most provoking immovable aspect of humility.

Why *will* you not understand me, my dear? cried her husband.

It is not my fault if I cannot understand you, my dear; I do not pretend to have your understanding, said the fair politician, affecting weakness to gain her point; like those artful candidates for papal dominion, who used to affect decrepitude and imbecility, till they secured at once absolute power and infallibility.

I know my abilities are quite inferior to yours, my dear, said Griselda; but I thought it was sufficient for a woman to know how to obey: I can do no more.

Fretted beyond his patience, her husband walked up and down the room greatly agitated, whilst she sat content and secure in tranquil obstinacy.

You are enough to provoke the patience of Job, my dear, cried her husband; you'll break my heart.

I am sorry for it, my dear; but if you will only tell me what I can do more to please you, I will do it.

Then, my love, cried he, taking hold of her white hand, which hung in a lifeless attitude over the arm of the couch, be happy, I conjure you! all I ask of you, is, to be happy.

That is out of my power, said she mildly, suffering her husband to keep her hand, as if it was an act of duty to submit to his caresses. He resigned her hand; her countenance never varied: if she had been slave to the most despotic Sultan of the East, she could not have shown more heartless

submission, than she displayed to this most indulgent European 'husband lover.'

Unable to command his temper, or to conceal how much he was hurt, he rose and said,

I will leave you for the present, my dear; some time when you are better disposed to converse with me, I will return.

Whenever you please, sir; all times are alike to me: whenever you are at leisure, I can have no choice.

CHAPTER IX.

And acting duty all the merit lose.

SOME hours afterwards, hoping to find his Sultana in a better humour, Mr. Bolingbroke returned: but no sooner did he approach the sofa on which she was still seated, than she again seemed to turn into stone, like the princess Rhezzia, in the Persian Tales; who was blooming and charming, except when her husband entered the room. The unfortunate princess Rhezzia loved her husband tenderly, but was doomed to this fate by a vile enchanter. If she was more to be pitied for being subject to involuntary metamorphosis, our heroine is surely more to be admired, for the constancy with which she endured a self-inflicted penance; a penance calculated to render her odious in the eyes of a husband by whom she was passionately beloved.

My dear, said this most patient of men, I am sorry to renew any ideas that will be disagreeable to you; I will mention the subject but once more, and then let it be forgotten for ever. Our foolish dispute about Mr. Nettleby. Let us compromise

the matter. I will bear Mr. John Nettleby for your sake, if you will bear Mrs. Granby for mine. I will go to see Mr. Nettleby to-morrow, if you will come the day afterwards with me to Mr. Granby's. Where husband and wife do not agree in their wishes, it is reasonable that each should yield a little of their will to the other. I hope this compromise will satisfy you, my dear.

It does not become a wife to enter into any compromise with her husband ; she has nothing to do but to obey, as soon as he signifies his pleasure. I shall go to Mr. Granby's on Tuesday, as you command.

Command ! my love.

As you——whatever you please to call it.

But are you satisfied with this arrangement, my dear ?

It is of no manner of consequence whether I am or not.

To me, you know, it is of the greatest : you must be sensible, that my sincere wish is to make you happy : I give you some proof of it by consenting to keep up an acquaintance with a man whose company I dislike.

I am much obliged to you, my dear ; but as to your going to see Mr. John Nettleby, it is a matter of perfect indifference to me ; I only just mentioned it, as a thing of course ; I beg you will not do it on my account : I hope you will do whatever you think best, and what pleases yourself, upon this and every other occasion. I shall never more presume to offer my advice.

Nothing more could be obtained from the submissive wife ; she went to Mr. Granby's ; she was all duty ; for she knew the show of it was the most provoking thing upon earth to a husband, at least to such a husband as hers. She therefore persisted

in this line of conduct, till she made her victim at last exclaim,

I love thee and hate thee ; but if I can tell
The cause of my love and my hate, may I die !
I can feel it, alas ! I can feel it too well,
That I love thee and hate thee, but cannot tell why.

His fair one was much flattered by this confession ; she triumphed in having excited 'this contrariety of feelings ;' nor did she foresee the possibility of her husband's recollecting that stanza which the schoolboy, more philosophical than the poet, applies to his tyrant.

Whilst our heroine was thus acting to perfection the part of a dutiful wife, Mrs. Nettleby was seconding her to the best of her abilities, and announcing her amongst all their acquaintance, in the interesting character of—'a woman that is very much to be pitied.'

'Poor Mrs. Bolingbroke! . . . Don't you think, ma'am, she is very much changed since her marriage?—Quite fallen away!—And all her fine spirits, what are become of them?—It really grieves my heart to see her.—O, she is a very unhappy woman ; really to be pitied, if you knew but all.'

Then a significant nod, or a melancholy mysterious look, set the imagination of the company at work ; or if this did not succeed, a whisper in plain terms, pronounced Mr. Bolingbroke—'a sad sort of husband, a very odd-tempered man, and, in short, a terrible tyrant ; though nobody would guess it, who only saw him in company ; but men are such deceivers !'

Mr. Bolingbroke soon found that all his wishes were thwarted, and all his hopes of happiness crossed, by the straws which this evil-minded dame contrived to throw in his way. Her influence

over his wife, he saw, increased every hour: though they visited each other every day, these ladies could never meet without having some important secrets to impart, and conjurations were to be performed in private, at which a husband could not be permitted to assist. Then notes without number were to pass continually, and these were to be thrown hastily into the fire, at the approach of the enemy. Mr. Bolingbroke determined to break this league, which seemed to be more a league of hatred than of amity.—The London winter was now over, and, taking advantage of the continuance of his wife's perverse fit of duty and unqualified submission, he one day requested her to accompany him into the country, to spend a few weeks with his friend Mr. Granby, at his charming place in Devonshire. The part of a wife was to obey, and Griselda was bound to support her character. She resolved, however, to make her obedience cost her lord as dear as possible, and she promised herself that this party of pleasure should become a party of pain. She and her lord were to travel in the same carriage with Mr. and Mrs. Granby. Griselda had only time, before she set off, to write a hasty billet to Mrs. Nettleby, to inform her of these intentions, and to bid her adieu till better times. Mrs. Nettleby sincerely regretted this interruption of their hourly correspondence; for she was deprived not only of the pleasure of hearing, but of making matrimonial complaints. She had now been married two months, and her fool began to grow restive; no animal on earth is more restive than a fool: but confident that Mrs. Nettleby will hold the bridle with a strong hand, we leave her to pull against his hard mouth.

CHAPTER X.

Plaisir ne l'est qu'autant qu'on le partage.

WE pass over the infinite variety of petty torments which our heroine contrived to inflict upon her fellow-travellers, during her journey down to Devonshire. Inns, food, beds, carriage, horses, baggage, roads, prospect, hill, dale, sun, wind, dust, rain, earth, air, fire and water, all afforded her matter of complaint. It was astonishing that Emma met with none of these inconveniences; but as fast as they were discovered, she amused herself in trying to obviate them.

Lord Kames has observed, that a power to recall at will pleasing objects, would be a more valuable gift to any mortal than ever was bestowed in a fairy tale. With this power Emma was endowed in the highest perfection; and as fast as our heroine recollected some evil that had happened, or was likely to happen, Emma raised the opposite idea of some good, past, present, or future; so that it was scarcely possible even for the spirit of contradiction personified to resist the magic of her good-humour. No sooner did she arrive at her own house, than she contrived a variety of ways of showing attention and kindness to her guest; and when all this was received with sullen indifference, or merely as tributes due to superiority, Emma was not discouraged in her benevolence, but, instead of being offended, seemed to pity her friend 'for having had her temper so unhappily spoiled.'

Griselda is so handsome, said Mrs. Granby one

day in her defence, she has such talents, she has been so much admired, worshipped, and indulged, that it would be wonderful if she were not a little spoiled. I dare say, that if I had been in her place, my brain would never have stood the intoxication. Who can measure their strength, or their weakness, till they are tried? Another thing should be considered; Griselda excites envy, and though she may not have more faults than her neighbours, they are more noticed, because they are in the full light of prosperity. What a number of motes swarm in a single ray of light, coming through the shutter of a darkened room! there are not more motes in that spot than in any other part of the room, but the sunbeams show them more distinctly. The dust that lives in snug obscurity should consider this, and have mercy upon its fellow-dust.

In Emma's kindness there was none of the parade of goodness, she seemed to follow her natural disposition, and, as Griselda once said of her, to be good, because she could not help it. She required neither praise nor thanks for any thing that she did; and, provided her friends were happy, she was satisfied, without ever wishing to be admired, as the cause of that happiness. Her powers of pleasing were chiefly remarkable for lasting longer than others, and the secret of their permanence was not easily guessed, because it was so simple. It depended merely on the equability of her humour. It is said, that there is nothing marvellous in the colours of those Egyptian monuments which have been the admiration of ages; the secret of their duration is supposed to depend simply on the fineness of the climate and invariability of the temperature.—But,

Griselda will admit no wandering muse.

Mr. Bolingbroke was by this time tired of being in one mood, even though it was the sullen, his genius was cramped by the constraint of his submission. She recovered her charming soon after she came into the country, and, in a short time, no mortal mixture of earth's could be more agreeable. She called forth her charm; she was all gaiety, wit, and smiles; she poured light and life upon conversation.

The Marquis de Chastellux said of some fascinating fair one—'She had no expression without wit, and no grace without expression.' It was wonderful to our heroine to hear it said, how charming Mrs. Bolingbroke can be when she pleases! when she wishes to captivate, how irresistible!—Who can equal Mrs. Bolingbroke, when she is in one of her *good days*?

The triumph of eclipsing Mrs. Granby would have been delightful, but that Emma seemed to have no mortification from being thrown into the shade; she seemed to enjoy her friend's success so much, that it was impossible to consider her as rival. She had so carefully avoided noticing any disagreement or coolness between Mr. and Mrs. Bolingbroke, that it might have been doubted whether she attended to their mutual conduct; but the obvious delight she took in seeing them again on good terms with each other, proved that she was not deficient in penetration. She appeared to desire only what others desired that she should see, and on these delicate occasions, where voluntary modesty is not artifice, but prudence. Mr. Bolingbroke was now enchanted with Griselda, and ready to claim every instant, 'Be ever thus!'

Her husband thought he had found a mine of happiness; he began to breathe, and to bless his stars. He had indeed lighted unexpectedly

upon a rich vein, but it was soon exhausted, and all his further progress was impeded, by certain vapours, dangerous to approach. Fatal sweets! which lure the ignorant to destruction, but from which the more experienced fly with precipitation.—Our heroine was now fully prepared to kill her husband with kindness; she was afraid, if he rode, that his horse would throw him; if he walked, that he would tire himself; if he sat still, that he must want exercise; if he went out, that he would catch cold; if he staid at home, that he was kept a prisoner; if he did not eat, that he was sick; if he did eat, that he would be sick;—&c. &c. &c. &c. There was no end to these fond fears; he felt that there was something ridiculous in submitting to them; and yet to resist in the least, was deemed the height of unkindness and ingratitude. One night she fell into a fit of melancholy, upon his laughing at her fears, that he should kill himself, by standing for an instant at an open window, on a fine night, to look at a beautiful rising moon. When he endeavoured to recover her from her melancholy, it was suddenly converted into anger, and, after tears, came a storm of reproaches. Her husband, in consideration of the kindness of her original intention, passed over her anger, and even for some days refrained from objecting to any regimen she prescribed for his health and happiness. But his forbearance failed him at length, and he presumed to eat some salad, which his wife knew would disagree with him. She was provoked afterwards, because she could not make him allow that it had made him ill. She termed this extreme obstinacy; he pleaded that it was simple truth. Truth, upon some occasions, is the most offensive thing that can be spoken; the lady was enraged, and, after saying every thing provoking

that matrimonial spleen could suggest, when he in his turn grew warm, she cooled, and said, You must be sensible, my dear, that all I say and do, arises from affection.

O, my love, said he, recovering his good-humour, this never-failing opiate soothes my vanity, and lulls my anger; then you may govern me as you please. Torment me to death,—I cannot oppose you.

I suppose, said she, you think me like the vampire-bat, who fans her victim to sleep with her wings, whilst she sucks his life-blood.

Yes, exactly, said he smiling; thank you for the apt allusion.

Very apt indeed, said she, and a thick gloom overspread her countenance. She persisted in taking his assent in sober earnest. Yes, said she, I find you think all my kindness is treacherous, I will show you no more, and then you cannot accuse me of treachery.

It was in vain that he protested he had been only in jest; she was convinced that he was in earnest; she was suddenly afflicted with an absolute incapacity of distinguishing jest from earnest. She recurred to the idea of the vampire-bat, whenever it was convenient to her to suppose that her husband thought strange things of her, which never entered his brain. This bat proved to him a bird of ill omen, which preceded a train of misfortunes, that no mortal foresight could reach, and no human prudence avert. His goddess was not to be appeased by any propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice.

CHAPTER XI.

Short is the period of insulting power,
Offended Cupid finds his vengeful hour.

FINDING it impossible to regain his fair one's favour, Mr. Bolingbroke absented himself from her presence. He amused himself for some days with his friend Mr. Granby, in attending to a plantation which he was laying out in his grounds. Griselda was vexed to perceive that her husband could find any amusement independent of her; and she never failed, upon his return, to mark her displeasure.

One morning the gentlemen had been so much occupied with their plantation, that they did not attend the breakfast-table precisely in due time: the contrast in the looks of the two ladies when their husbands entered the room was striking. Griselda was provoked with Mrs. Granby for being so good-humoured.

Lord bless me! Mrs. Granby, how you spoil these men! cried she.

All the time the gentlemen were at breakfast, Mrs. Bolingbroke played with her tea-spoon, and did not deign to utter a syllable: Emma, on the contrary, inquired how their plantation was going on, and interested herself in the most unaffected and agreeable manner, in the object upon which their minds happened to be intent. No one more than Emma had the habit of interesting herself in all the daily occupations and little objects of her friends. These minute attentions frequently recurring, tend materially to increase affection, and se-

cured domestic happiness. By such slender and scarcely perceptible fibres is society *felted* together.

When the gentlemen left the breakfast-table, and returned to their business, Griselda, who was, as our readers may have observed, one of the fashionable lollers by profession, established herself upon a couch, and began an attack upon Emma, for spoiling her husband in such a sad manner. Emma defended herself in a playful way, by answering that she could not venture to give unnecessary pain, because she was not so sure as some of her friends might be, of their power of giving pleasure. Mrs. Bolingbroke proceeded to descant upon the difference between friendship and love: with some vanity, and some malice, she touched upon the difference between the *sorts of sentiments* which different women excited. Passion, she argued, could be kept alive, only by a certain happy mixture of caprice and grace, coldness and ill-humour. She confessed, that for her part, she never could be content with the friendship of a husband. Emma, without claiming or disclaiming her pretensions to love, quoted the saying of a French gentleman:

*L' Amitié est L' Amour sans ailes **.

Griselda had no apprehension that love could ever fly from her, and she declared she could not endure him without his wings.

Our heroine did not imagine that any of the little vexations which she habitually inflicted upon her husband, could really diminish his regard. She never had calculated the prodigious effects which

* Friendship is love deprived of his wings.

can be produced by petty causes constantly acting. Indeed this is a consideration, to which the pride or short-sightedness of human nature is not prone.

Who in contemplating one of Raphael's finest pictures, fresh from the master's hand, ever bestowed a thought upon the wretched little worm which works its destruction? Who that beholds the gilded vessel, gliding in gallant trim, 'youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm,' ever at that instant thought of—barnacles? The imagination is disgusted by the anticlimax; and of all species of the bathos, the sinking from visionary happiness to sober reality, is that from which human nature is most averse. The wings of the imagination, accustomed to ascend, resist the downward flight.

Confident of her charms, heedless of danger, habituated to think her empire absolute and eternal; our heroine to amuse herself, and to display her power to Emma, persisted in her practice of tormenting. The ingenuity with which she varied her tortures, was certainly admirable. After exhausting old ones, she invented new; and when the new lost their efficacy, she recurred to the old. She had often observed that the blunt method of contradicting, which some bosom friends practise in conversation, is of sovereign power to provoke: and this consequently, though unpolite, she disdained not to imitate. It had the greater effect, as it was in diametrical opposition to the style of Mrs. Granby's conversation; who in discussions with her husband, or her intimate friends, was peculiarly and habitually attentive to politeness. She gave her opinions always freely, but with constant deference or charity for the sentiments of her friends. Arguments, as she managed them, never degenerated into disputes; and the true end of conversation, that of giving and receiving pleasure, was never

sacrificed to the vanity of saying good things, or to the pride of victory.

CHAPTER XII.

*Ella biasmandol sempre, e dispregiando
Se gli venia piu sempre inimicando.*

By her judicious and kind interposition, Emma often prevented the disagreeable consequences that threatened to ensue from Griselda's disputatious habits: but one night it was past her utmost skill to avert a violent storm, which arose about the pronunciation of a word. It began about eleven o'clock. Just as the family were sitting down to supper, seemingly in perfect harmony of spirits, Mr. Bolingbroke chanced to say,

I think the wind is rising. (He pronounced the word *wind* short.)

Wind! my dear, cried his wife, echoing his pronunciation; do for heaven's sake call it wind.

The lady sounded this word long.

Wind! my love, repeated he after her: I doubt whether that be the right pronunciation.

I am surprised you can doubt it, said she, for I never heard any body call it *wind* but yourself.

Did not you, my love? that is very extraordinary; many people I believe call it *wind*.

Vulgarians, perhaps!

Vulgarians! No indeed, my dear; very polite, well-informed people.

Griselda, with a look of unutterable contempt, reiterated the word *polite*!

Yes, my dear, *polite!* persisted Mr. Bolingbroke,

who was now come to such a pass, that he would defend his opinion in opposition to hers, stoutly and warmly. Yes, *polite*, my dear, I maintain it; the most *polite* people pronounce it as I do.

You may maintain what you please, my dear, said the lady coolly; but I maintain the contrary.

Assertion is no proof on either side, I acknowledge, said Mr. Bolingbroke recollecting himself.

No, in truth, said Mrs. Bolingbroke, especially such an absurd assertion as yours, my dear. Now I will go no further than Mrs. Granby: Mrs. Granby, did you ever hear any person, who knew how to speak, pronounce w-i-n-d—*wind*?

Mrs. Granby, have not you heard it called *wind* in good company?

The disputants eagerly approached her at the same instant, and looked as if their fortunes or lives depended upon the decision.

I think I have heard the word pronounced both ways, by well-bred and well-informed people, said Mrs. Granby.

That is saying nothing, my dear, said Mrs. Bolingbroke pettishly.

That is saying all I want, said Mr. Bolingbroke, satisfied.

I would lay any wager, however, that Mr. ****, if he were here, would give it in my favour; and I suppose you will not dispute his authority.

I will not dispute the authority of Sheridan's Dictionary, cried Mr. Bolingbroke, taking it down from the bookcase, and turning over the leaves hastily. Sheridan gives it for me, my dear, said he with exultation.

You need not speak with such triumph, my dear, for I do not submit to Sheridan.

No! Will you submit to Kenrick then?

Let us see what he says, and I will then tell you, said the lady. No—Kenrick was not of her opinion, and he was no authority. Walker was produced; and this battle of the pronouncing dictionaries seemed likely to have no end. Mrs. Granby, when she could be heard, remarked that it was difficult to settle any dispute about pronunciation, because in fact no reasons could be produced, and no standard appealed to but custom, which is perpetually changing; and, as Johnson says, ‘whilst our language is variable with the caprice of all who use it, words can no more be ascertained in a dictionary, than a grove, in the agitation of a storm, can be accurately delineated from its picture in the water.’

The combatants would scarcely allow Emma time to finish this allusion, and certainly did not give themselves time to understand it; but continued to fight about the word custom, the only word that they had heard.

Yes, custom! custom! cried they at once, custom must decide to be sure. Then came *my* custom and *your* custom; the custom of the stage, the custom of the best company, the custom of the best poets; and all these were opposed to one another with increasing rapidity. Good heavens, my dear! did you ever hear Kemble say ‘Rage on, ye *winds!*’ ridiculous!

I grant you on the stage it may be winds; but in common conversation it is allowable to pronounce it as I do, my dear.

I appeal to the best poets, Mr. Bolingbroke; nothing can be more absurd than your way of—

Listen, lively lordlings all! interrupted Emma, pressing with playful vehemence between the disputants; I must be heard, for I have not spoken this half hour, and thus I pronounce,

You both are right and both are wrong.
And now, my good friends, had we not better go
to rest? said she, for it is past midnight.

As they took their candles, and went up stairs,
the parties continued the battle; Mrs. Bolingbroke
brought quotations innumerable to her aid, and in
a shrill tone repeated,

He might not let e'en the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly.

— pass by me as the idle wind,
Which I respect not.

And let her down the wind to pray at fortune.

Blow, blow thou winter's wind,
Thou art not so unkind.

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks; rage, blow.

Her voice was raised to the highest pitch; it was
in vain that her husband repeated that he acknow-
ledged the word should be called as she pro-
nounced it in poetry; she reiterated her quotations
and her assertions till at last she knew not what
she said; her sense failed the more her anger in-
creased. At length Mr. Bolingbroke yielded.
Noise conquers sometimes where art fails.

Thus, said he, the hawk that could not be hood-
winked was at last tamed by being exposed to the
din of a blacksmith's hammer.

Griselda was incensed by this remark, and still
more by the allusion, which she called the second
edition of the vampire-bat. Both husband and wife
went to sleep mutually displeased, and more dis-
gusted with each other than they had ever been
since their marriage: and all this for the pronun-
ciation of a word!

Early in the morning they were awakened by a messenger, who brought an express, informing Mr. Bolingbroke that his uncle was not expected to live, and that he wished to see him immediately. Mr. Bolingbroke rose instantly: all the time that he was dressing, and preparing in the greatest hurry for his journey, Griselda tormented him by disputing about the propriety of his going, and ended with,

Promise me to write every post, my dear positively you must.

CHAPTER XIII.

He sighs for freedom, she for power.

MR. BOLINGBROKE did not comply with his wife's request, or rather with her injunction, to write *every post*; and when he did write, Griselda always found some fault with his letters. They were too short, too stiff, or too cold, and very different indeed, she said, from what he used to write before he was married. This was certainly true; and absence was not at the present crisis the most advantageous thing possible to our heroine. Absence is said to extinguish a weak flame, and to increase a strong one. Mr. Bolingbroke's passion for his Griselda had, by some means, been of late diminished. He parted from her with the disagreeable impression of a dispute upon his mind. As he went further from her he perceived that, instead of dragging a lengthened chain, his chain grew lighter. His uncle recovered; he found agreeable society in the neighbourhood; he was persuaded to prolong his stay; his mind, which had been conti-

nually harassed, now enjoyed some tranquillity. On an unlucky evening, he recollected Martial's favourite epigram and his wife, in one and the same instant :

My mind still hovering round about you,
I thought I could not live without you ;
But now we have lived three weeks asunder,
How I lived with you is the wonder.

In the mean time, our heroine's chief amusement, in her husband's absence, was writing to complain of him to Mrs. Nettleby. This lady's answers were now filled with a reciprocity of conjugal abuse ; she had found to her cost that it is the most desperate imprudence to marry a fool, in the hopes of governing him. All her powers of tormenting were lost upon her blessed helpmate. He was not to be moved by wit or sarcasm, eloquence or noise, tears or caresses, reason, jealousy, or the opinion of the world.

What did he care what the world thought ? he would do as he pleased himself ; he would be master in his own house ; it did not signify talking or crying, or being in the right ; right or wrong, he would be obeyed ; a wife should never govern him ; he had no notion of letting a woman rule, for his part ; women were born to obey, and promised it in church. As to jealousy, let his wife look to that ; if she did not choose to behave properly, he knew his remedy, and would as soon be divorced as not. ' Rule a wife and have a wife,' was the burden of his song.

It was in vain to goad his insensible nature, in hopes of obtaining any good : vain as the art said to be possessed by Linnæus, of producing pearls by pricking oysters. Mrs. Nettleby, the witty, the spirited widow Nettleby, was now in the most hope-

less and abject condition; tyrannized over by a dunce, and who could pity her? not even her dear Griselda.

One day Mrs. Bolingbroke received an epistle of seven pages from *poor* Mrs. Nettleby, giving a full and true account of Mr. Nettleby's extraordinary obstinacy about 'the awning of a pleasure-boat, which he would not suffer to be made according to her directions, and which consequently caused the oversetting of the boat, and *very nearly* the deaths of all the party.' Tired with the long history, and with the notes upon the history of this adventure, in Mrs. Nettleby's declamatory style, our heroine walked out to refresh herself. She followed a pleasant path in a field near the house, and came to a shady lane, where she heard Mr. and Mrs. Granby's voices. She went towards the place. There was a turn in the lane, and a thick hedge of hawthorn prevented her from being immediately seen. As she approached, she heard Mr. Granby saying to Emma, in the fondest tone of affection,

My dear Emma, pray let it be done the way that you like best.

They were looking at a cottage which they were building. The masons had, by mistake, followed the plan which Mr. Granby proposed, instead of that which Emma had suggested. The wall was half built; but Mr. Granby desired that it might be pulled down, and altered to suit Emma's taste.

Bless me! cried Griselda with great surprise, are you really going to have it pulled down, Mr. Granby?

Certainly, replied he; and what is more, I am going to help to pull it down.

He ran to assist the masons, and worked with a

degree of zeal which increased Mrs. Bolingbroke's astonishment.

Good heavens! He could not do more for you if you were his mistress.

He never did so much for me till I was his wife, said Emma.

That's strange!—Very unlike other men. But, my dear, said Mrs. Bolingbroke, taking Mrs. Granby's arm, and drawing her aside,—How did you acquire such surprising power over your husband?

By not desiring it, I believe, replied Emma, smiling. I have never used any other art.

CHAPTER XIV.

*Et cependant, avec toute sa diablerie,
Il faut que je l'appelle et mon cœur et ma mie.*

OUR heroine was still meditating upon the extraordinary method by which Emma had acquired power over her husband, when a carriage drove down the lane, and Mr. Bolingbroke's head appeared looking out of the chaise window. His face did not express so much joy as she thought it ought to display at the sight of her, after three weeks absence. She was vexed, and received him coldly. He turned to Mr. and Mrs. Granby, and was not miserable. Griselda did not speak one word during their walk home; still her husband continued in good spirits: she was more and more out of humour, and took no pains to conceal her

displeasure. He bore it well ; but then he seemed to feel it so little, that she was exasperated beyond measure ; she seized the first convenient opportunity, when she found him alone, of beginning a direct attack.

This is not the way in which you *used* to meet me, after an absence ever so short. He replied, that he was really very glad to see her ; but that she, on the contrary, seemed sorry to see him.

Because you are quite altered now, continued she in a querulous tone. I always prophesied that you would cease to love me.

Take care, my dear, said he smiling, some prophecies are the cause of their own accomplishment,—the sole cause. Come, my Griselda, continued he in a serious tone, do not let us begin to quarrel the moment we meet. He offered to embrace her, but she drew back haughtily. What ! do you confess you no longer love me ? cried she.

Far from it ; but it is in your own power, said he, hesitating—to diminish or increase my love.

Then it is no love, if it can be either increased or diminished, cried she ; it is no love worth having.

Remember the day when you swore to me, that our affection could not be increased or diminished.

I was *in* love in those days, my dear, and did not know what I swore, said Mr. Bolingbroke, endeavouring to turn the conversation ; never reproach a man, when he is sober, with what he said when he was drunk.

Then you are sober now, are you ? cried she angrily.

It is to be hoped I am, said he—laughing.

Cruel, barbarous man ! cried she.

For being sober ? said he ; have not you been

doing all you could to sober me these eighteen months, my dear? and now do not be angry if you have, in some degree, succeeded.

Succeeded!—O wretched woman! this is thy lot! exclaimed Griselda, clasping her hands in an agony of passion;—O that my whole unfortunate sex could *see* me,—could *hear* you at this instant! Never, never did the love of man endure one twelvemonth after marriage. False! treacherous! calous! perjured tyrant! leave me! leave me!

He obeyed; she called him back with a voice half suffocated with rage, but he returned not.

Never was departing love recalled by the voice of reproach. It is not, as the poet fables, at the sight of human ties that Cupid is frightened, for he is blind; but he has the most delicate ears imaginable: scared at the sound of female objurgation, Love claps his wings and urges his irrevocable flight.

Griselda remained for some time in her apartment, to indulge her ill-humour; she had leisure for this indulgence; she was not now, as formerly, disturbed by the fond interruptions of a husband. Longer had her angry fit lasted, but for a circumstance which may to many of our readers appear unnatural: our heroine became hungry. The passions are more under the control of the hours of meals*, than any one who has not observed human life out of novels can easily believe. Dinner-time came, and Mrs. Bolingbroke appeared at dinner as usual. In the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Granby, pride compelled Griselda to command herself, and no one could guess what had passed between her and her husband: but no sooner was she again *tête-à-tête* with him, than her reproaches re-

* De Retz's Memoirs.

commenced with fresh violence.—Will you only do me the justice to tell me, Mr. Bolingbroke, cried she, what reason you have to love me less?

Reason, my dear! said he; you know love is independent of reason: according to your own definition, love is involuntary, you cannot therefore blame me for its caprices.

Insulting casuistry! said she weeping; sophistical nonsense! Have you any rational complaint to make against me, Mr. Bolingbroke?

I make no complaints, rational or irrational, my dear; they are all on your side.

And well they may be, cried Griselda, when you treat me in such a barbarous manner: but I do not complain; the world shall be my judge; the world will do me justice if you will not. I appeal to every body who knows me, have I ever given you the slightest cause for ill-usage? Can you accuse me of any extravagance, of any imprudence, sir?

I accuse you of neither, Mrs. Bolingbroke.

No, because you cannot, sir; my character, my fidelity, is unimpeached, unimpeachable; the world will do me justice

Griselda contrived to make even her virtues causes of torment. Upon the strength of this unimpeachable fidelity, she thought she might be as ill-humoured as she pleased; she seemed now to think that she had acquired an indefeasible right to reproach her husband, since she had extorted from him the confession that he loved her less, and that he had no crime to lay to her charge. Ten days passed on in this manner; the lady becoming every hour more irritable, the gentleman every hour more indifferent.

To have revived or killed affection *secundum artem*, the fair practitioner should now have thrown

in a little jealousy: but unluckily she was so situated that this was impossible. No object any way fit for the purpose was at hand; nothing was to be found within ten miles of her, but honest country squires, and

With all the powers of nature and of art,
She could not break one stubborn country heart.

CHAPTER XV.

To whom the virgin majesty of Eve,
As one who loves and some unkindness meets,
With sweet austere composure thus replies.

MANY privileges are, and ought to be, allowed to the virgin majesty of the sex; and even when the modern fair one does not reply with all the sweet austere composure of Eve, her anger may have charms for a lover. There is a certain susceptibility of temper, that sometimes accompanies the pride of virtue, which indicates a quick sense of shame, and warm feelings of affection; in whatsoever manner this may be shown, it appears amiable and graceful. And if this sensibility degenerate into irritability, a lover pardons it in his mistress; it is her prerogative to be haughty; and if he be dexterous to seize the moment of returning love, it is often his interest to promote quarrels, for the sake of the pleasure of reconciliation. The jealous doubts, the alternate hopes and fears, attendant on the passion of love, are dear to the lover whilst his passion lasts; but when that subsides, as subside it must, his taste for altercation ceases. The proverb which favours the quarrels of lovers, may prove fatal to the happiness of husbands: and woe be to

the wife who puts her faith in it ! There are, however, people, who would extend that dangerous maxim even to the commerce of friendship ; and it must be allowed (for morality neither in small matters nor great can gain any thing by suppressing the truth) it must be allowed, that in the commencement of an intimacy, the quarrels of friends may tend to increase their mutual regard, by affording to one or both of them opportunities of displaying qualities superior even to good-humour ; such as truth, fidelity, honour, or generosity. But whatever may be the sum total of their merit, when upon long acquaintance it comes to be fully known and justly appreciated, the most splendid virtues or talents can seldom compensate in domestic life for the want of temper. The fallacy of a maxim, like the absurdity of an argument, is sometimes best proved, by pushing it as far as it can go, by observing all its consequences. Our heroine, in the present instance, illustrates this truth to admiration ; her life and her husband's had now become a perpetual scene of disputes and reproaches ; every day the quarrels grew more bitter, and the reconciliations less sweet.

One morning Griselda and her husband were present, whilst Emma was busy showing some poor children how to plait straw for hats.

Next summer, my dear, when we are settled at home, I hope you will encourage some manufacture of this kind amongst the children of our tenants, said Mr. Bolingbroke to his lady.

I have no genius for teaching manufactures of this sort, replied Mrs. Bolingbroke scornfully.

Her husband urged the matter no further. A few minutes afterwards, he drew out a straw from a bundle which one of the children held.

This is a fine straw, said he carelessly.

Fine straw! cried Mrs. Bolingbroke: no, that is very coarse. This, continued she, pulling one from another bundle; this is fine straw if you please.

I think mine is the finest, said Mr. Bolingbroke.

Then you must be blind, Mr. Bolingbroke, cried the lady, eagerly comparing them.

Well, my dear, said he laughing, we will not dispute about straws.

No, indeed, said she; but I observe, whenever you know you are in the wrong, Mr. Bolingbroke, you say *we will not dispute, my dear*: now pray look at these straws, Mrs. Granby, you that have eyes, which is the finest?

I will draw lots, said Emma, taking one playfully from Mrs. Bolingbroke, for it seems to me that there is little or no difference between them.

No difference? Oh, my dear Emma! said Mrs. Bolingbroke.

My dear Griselda, cried her husband, taking the other straw from her, and blowing it away; indeed it is not worth disputing about: this is too childish.

Childish! repeated she, looking after the straw as it floated down the wind; I see nothing childish in being in the right: your raising your voice in that manner never convinces me. Jupiter is always in the wrong, you know, when he has recourse to his thunder.

Thunder my dear Griselda, about a straw well! when women are determined to dispute, it is wonderful how ingenious they are in finding subjects. I give you joy, my dear, of having attained the perfection of the art: you can now literally dispute about straws.

Emma insisted at this instant upon having an opinion about the shape of a hat, which she had just tied under the chin of a rosy little girl of six

years old; upon whose smiling countenance she fixed the attention of the angry lady.

All might now have been well, but Griselda had a pernicious habit of recurring to any slight words of blame, which had been used by her friends. Her husband had congratulated her upon having attained the perfection of the art of disputing, since she could cavil about straws. This reproach rankled in her mind. There are certain diseased states of the body, in which the slightest wound festers, and becomes incurable. It is the same with the mind; and our heroine's was in this dangerous predicament.

CHAPTER XVI.

*Que suis-je ? ... qu'ai-je fait ? Que dois-je faire encore ?
Quel transport me saisit ? Quel chagrin me dévore ?*

SOME hours after the quarrel about the straws, when her husband had entirely forgotten it, and was sitting very quietly in his own apartment writing a letter, Griselda entered the room with a countenance prepared for great exploits.

Mr. Bolingbroke, she began in an awful tone of voice, if you are at leisure to attend me, I wish to speak to you upon a subject of some importance.

I am quite at leisure, my dear, pray sit down; what is the matter? you really alarm me!

It is not my intention to alarm you, Mr. Bolingbroke, continued she in a still more solemn tone; the time is past when what I have to say could have alarmed; I am persuaded that you will now hear

it without emotion, or with an emotion of pleasure.

She paused : he laid down his pen, and looked all expectation.

I am come to announce to you a fixed, unalterable resolution—To part from you, Mr. Bolingbroke.

Are you serious, my dear ?

Perfectly serious, sir.

These words did not produce the revolution in her husband's countenance which Griselda had expected. She trembled with a mixed indescribable emotion of grief and rage, when she heard he calmly reply :

Let us part then, Griselda, if that be your wish ; but let me be sure that it is your wish : I must hear it repeated from your lips, when you are perfectly calm.

With a voice inarticulate from passion, Griselda began to assure him that she was perfectly calm ; but he stopped her, and mildly said,

Take four-and-twenty hours to consider of what you are about, Griselda ; I will be here at this time to-morrow to learn your final determination.

Mr. Bolingbroke left the room.

Mrs. Bolingbroke was incapable of thinking she could only feel. Conflicting passions assailed her heart. All the woman rushed upon her so she loved her husband more at this instant, than she had ever loved him before. His firmness excited at once her anger and her admiration. She could not believe that she had heard his words *rightly*. She sat down to recall minutely every circumstance of what had just passed, every word every look ; she finished, by persuading herself that his calmness was affected, that the best method she could possibly take, was by a show of

sistance to bully him out of his indifference. She little knew what she hazarded: when the danger of losing her husband's love was imaginary, and solely of her own creating, it affected her in the most violent manner; but now that the peril was real and imminent, she was insensible to its existence.

A celebrated traveller in the Alps advises people to imagine themselves walking amidst precipices when they are safe upon smooth ground; and he assures them that by this practice, they may inure themselves so to the idea of danger, as to prevent all sense of it in the most perilous situations.

The four-and-twenty hours passed; and at the appointed moment our heroine and her husband met. As she entered the room, she observed that he held a book in his hand, but was not reading; he put it down, rose deliberately, and placed a chair for her, in silence.

I thank you, I would rather stand, said she: he put aside the chair, and walked to a door at the other end of the room, to examine whether there was any one in the adjoining apartment.

It is not necessary that what we have to say should be overheard by servants, said he.

I have no objection to being overheard, said Griselda; I have nothing to say of which I am ashamed, and all the world must know it soon.

As Mr. Bolingbroke returned towards her, she examined his countenance with an inquisitive eye. It was expressive of concern; grave—but calm. She was decided in opinion that the calm was affected. She little knew the truth.

Whoever has seen a balloon—The reader, however impatient, must listen to this allusion—Whoever has seen a balloon, may have observed, that in its flaccid state it can be folded and unfolded with the greatest ease, and it is manageable even

by a child ; but when once filled, the force of multitudes cannot restrain, nor the art of man direct its course. Such is the human mind—so tractable before, so ungovernable after it fills with passion. By slow degrees, unnoticed by our heroine, the balloon had been filling. It was full ; but it was yet held down by strong cords : it remained with her to cut or not to cut them.

Reflect before you speak, my dear Griselda, said her husband ; consider that on the words which you are going to pronounce depend your fate and mine.

I have reflected sufficiently, said she, and decide, Mr. Bolingbroke—to part.

Be it so, cried he ; fire flashed from his eyes ; he grew red and pale in an instant. Be it so, repeated he in an irrevocable voice—We part for ever.

He vanished, before Griselda could speak or think. She was breathless ; her limbs trembled ; she could not support herself ; she sunk she knew not where. She certainly loved her husband better than any thing upon earth, except power. When she came to her senses, and perceived that she was alone, she felt as if she was abandoned by all the world. The dreadful word for ever, still sounded in her ears. She was tempted to yield her humour to her affection. It was but a momentary struggle ; the love of sway prevailed. When she came more fully to herself, she recurred to the belief that her husband could not be in earnest, or at least that he would never persist, if she had but the courage to brave him to the utmost.

CHAPTER XVII.

*L'ai-je vu se troubler, et me plaindre un moment ?
En ai-je pu tirer un seul gémissément ?*

ASHAMED of her late weakness, our heroine rallied all her spirits, and resolved to meet her husband at supper with an undaunted countenance. Her provoking composure was admirably prepared ; but it was thrown away, for Mr. Bolingbroke did not appear at supper. When Griselda retired to rest, she found a note from him upon her dressing-table ; she tore it open with a triumphant hand, certain that it came to offer terms of reconciliation.

‘You will appoint whatever friend you think proper to settle the terms of our separation. The time I desire to be as soon as possible. I have not mentioned what has passed to Mr. or Mrs. Granby ; you will mention it to them or not, as you think fit. On this point, as on all others, you will henceforward follow your own discretion.

Twelve o'clock,
Saturday, Aug. 10th.

‘T. BOLINGBROKE.’

Mrs. Bolingbroke read and re-read this note ; weighed every word, examined every letter, and at last exclaimed aloud—He will not, cannot part from me. As she looked in the glass, she saw her maid standing in waiting. I shall not wait you to-night ; you need not wait, cried she. The maid retired, full of what she had just heard. Too intent upon her own thoughts to observe even this, she

continued her reverie, fixed to the spot on which she stood.

He cannot be in earnest, thought she. Either he is acting a part, or he is in a passion. Perhaps he is instigated by Mr. Granby : no, that cannot be, because he says he has not mentioned it to Mr. or Mrs. Granby, and he always speaks truth. If Emma had known it she would have prevented him from writing such a harsh note, for she is such a good creature ! I have a great mind to consult her ; she is so indulgent, so soothing ! But what does Mr. Bolingbroke say about her ? He leaves me to my own discretion to mention what has past or not : That means, Mention it, speak to Mrs. Granby, that she may advise you to submit. I will not say a word to her ; I will out-general him yet. He cannot leave me when it comes to the trial.

She sat down and wrote instantly this answer to her husband's note :

'I AGREE with you entirely, that the sooner we part the better. I shall write to-morrow to my friend Mrs. Nettleby, with whom I choose to reside. Mr. John Nettleby is the person I fix upon to settle the terms of our separation. In three days I shall have Mrs. Nettleby's answer. This is Saturday: on Tuesday then we part—for ever.

'GRISELDA BOLINGBROKE.'

Mrs. Bolingbroke summoned her maid. Deliver this note, said she, with your own hand ; do not send Le Grand with it to his master.

Griselda waited impatiently for her maid's return.

No answer, madam.

No answer ! Are you certain ?

Certain, ma'am : my master only said, Very well.

And why did not you ask him if there was any answer?

I did, ma'am. I said, Is there no answer for my lady? No answer, said he.

Was he up?

No, ma'am, he was in bed.

Was he asleep when you went in?

I cannot say positively, ma'am: he undrew the curtain as I went in, and asked, Who's there?

Did you go in on tiptoe?

I forget, really, ma'am,

You forget really! idiot!

But, ma'am, I recollect he turned his head to go to sleep as I closed the curtain.

You need not wait, said Mrs. Bolingbroke.

Provoked beyond the power of sleep, Mrs. Bolingbroke rose, and gave free expression to her feelings in an eloquent letter to Mrs. Nettleby: but even after this relief, Griselda could not rest, so much was she disturbed by the repose that her husband enjoyed, or was reputed to enjoy. In the morning she placed her letter in full view upon the mantelpiece in the drawing-room, in hopes that it would strike terror into the heart of her husband. To her great mortification, she saw Mr. Bolingbroke, with an unchanged countenance, give it to the servant, who came to ask for letters for the post. She had now three days of grace before Mrs. Nettleby's answer could arrive; but of these she disdained to take advantage: she never mentioned what had passed to Mrs. Granby, but persisted in the same haughty conduct towards her husband, persuaded that she should conquer at last.

The third day came, and brought an answer from Mrs. Nettleby. After a prodigious parade of professions, a decent display of astonishment at Mr. Bolingbroke's strange conduct, and pity for her dear Griselda, Mrs. Nettleby came to the point,

and ' was sorry to say, that Mr. Nettleby was in one of his obstinate fits, and could not be brought to listen to the scheme so near her heart : he would have nothing to do, he said, with settling the terms of Mr. and Mrs. Bolingbroke's separation, not he ! He absolutely refuses to meddle between man and wife ; and calls it meddling, continued Mrs. Nettleby. to receive you as an inmate, after you have parted from your husband. Mr. Bolingbroke, he says, has always been very civil to him, and came to see him in town ; therefore he will not encourage Mrs. Bolingbroke in her tantrums. I represented to him, that Mr. B. desires the thing, and leaves the choice of a residence to yourself ; but Mr. Nettleby replied in his brutal way, that you might choose a residence where you would, except in his house : that his house was his castle, and should never be turned into an asylum for runaway wives : that he would not set such an example to his own wife, &c. But, continued Mrs. Nettleby, you can imagine all the foolish things he said, and I need not repeat them, to vex you and myself. I know that he refuses to receive you, my dear Mrs. Bolingbroke, on purpose to provoke me. But what can one do or say to such a man ?—Adieu, my dear. Pray write when you are at leisure, and tell me how things are settled, or rather what is settled upon you ; which, to be sure, is now the only thing that you have to consider.

' Ever yours, affectionately,

' R. H. NETTLEBY.

' P.S.—Before you leave Devonshire, do, my dear, get me some of the fine Devonshire lace ; three or four dozen yards will do. I trust implicitly to your taste. You know I do not mind the price ; only let it be broad, for narrow lace is my aversion.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lost is the dear delight of giving pain!

MORTIFIED by her dear friend's affectionate letter and postscript, Griselda was the more determined to persist in her resolution to brave her husband to the utmost. The catastrophe, she thought, would always be in her own power; she recollected various separation-scenes in novels and plays, where the lady, after having tormented her husband or lover by every species of ill conduct, reforms in an instant, and a reconciliation is effected by some miraculous means. Our heroine had seen Lady Townly admirably well acted, and doubted not that she could now perform her part victoriously. With this hope, or rather in this confidence, she went in search of Mr. Bolingbroke. He was not in the house; he had gone out to take a solitary walk. Griselda hoped that she was the object of his reflections during his lonely ramble.

Yes, said she to herself, my power is not exhausted; I shall make his heart ache yet; and when he yields, how I will revenge myself!

She rang for her woman, and gave orders to have every thing immediately prepared for her departure.—As soon as the trunks are packed, let them be corded, and placed in the great hall, said she.

Our heroine, who had a happy memory, full well recollected the effect which the sight of the corded trunks produced in the Simple Story, and she thought the stroke so good that it would bear repetition.

With malice prepense, she therefore prepared the blow, which she flattered herself could not fail to astound her victim. Her pride still revolted from the idea of consulting Mrs. Granby; but some apology was requisite for thus abruptly quitting her house. Mrs. Bolingbroke began in a tone that seemed intended to preclude all discussion.

Mrs. Granby, do you know that Mr. Bolingbroke and I have come to a resolution to be happy the rest of our lives; and for this purpose we find it expedient to separate. Do not start or look so shocked, my dear. This word separation may sound terrible to some people, but I have, thank heaven! sufficient strength of mind to hear it with perfect composure. When a couple, who are chained together, pull different ways, the sooner they break their chain the better. I shall set out immediately for Weymouth. You will excuse me, my dear Mrs. Granby, you see the necessity of the case.

Mrs. Granby, with the most delicate kindness, began to expostulate; but Griselda declared, that she was incapable of using a friend so ill, as to pretend to listen to advice when her mind was determined irrevocably. Emma had no intention, she said, of obtruding her advice; but she wished that Mrs. Bolingbroke would give her own excellent understanding time to act, and that she would not throw away the happiness of her life in a fit of passion. Mrs. Bolingbroke protested that she never was freer from passion of every sort than she was at this moment. With an unusually placid countenance she turned from Mrs. Granby, and sat down to the piano forte. We shall not agree if I talk any more upon this subject, continued she, therefore I had better sing. I believe my music is better than my logic: at all events I prefer music.

In a fine *bravura* style Griselda then began to sing,

What have I to do with thee,
Dull, unjoyous constancy? &c.

And afterwards she played all her gayest airs to convince Mrs. Granby that her heart was quite at ease. She continued playing for an unconscionable time with the most provoking perseverance.

Emma stood at the window watching for Mr. Bolingbroke's return. Here comes Mr. Bolingbroke!—How melancholy he looks!—Oh, my dear Griselda! cried she, stopping Mrs. Bolingbroke's hand as it ran gaily over the keys, this is no time for mirth or bravado, let me conjure you.—

I hate to be conjured, interrupted Griselda, breaking from her: I am not a child to be coaxed and kissed and sugar-plummed into being good and behaving prettily. Do me the favour to let Mr. Bolingbroke know that I am in the study, and desire to speak to him for one minute.

No power could detain the peremptory lady: she took her way to the study, and rejoiced as she crossed the hall to see the trunks placed as she had ordered. It was impossible that her husband could avoid seeing them the moment he should enter the house.—What a satisfaction!—Griselda seated herself at ease in an arm-chair in the study, and took up a book which lay open on the table. Mr. Bolingbroke's pencil-case was in it, and the following passage was marked:

'Il y a un lieu sur la terre où les joies pures sont inconnues; d'où la politesse est exilée et fait place à l'égoïsme, à la contradiction, aux injures à demi-voilées; le remords et l'inquiétude, furies insatiables, y tourmentent les habitans. Ce lieu est la maison de deux époux qui ne peuvent ni s'estimer ni s'aimer.'

‘ Il y a un lieu sur la terre où le vice ne s’introduit pas, où les passions tristes n’ont jamais d’empire, où le plaisir et l’innocence habitent toujours ensemble, où les soins sont chers, où les travaux sont doux, où les peines s’oublient dans les entretiens, où l’on jouit du passé, du présent, del’avenir; et c’est la maison de deux époux qui s’aiment.’*

A pang of remorse seized Griselda as she read these words; they seemed to have been written on purpose for her. Struck with the sense of her own folly, she paused,—she doubted;—but then she thought that she had gone too far to recede. Her pride could not bear the idea of acknowledging that she had been wrong, or of seeking reconciliation.

I could live very happily with this man, but then to yield the victory to him!—and to reform!—No, no,—all reformed heroines are stupid and odious.

CHAPTER XIX.

And, vanquish’d, quit victoriously the field.

GRISELDA flung the book from her as her husband entered the room.

You have had an answer, madam, from your friend Mrs. Nettleby, I perceive, said he calmly.

I have, sir. Family reasons prevent her from receiving me at present; therefore I have determined upon going to Weymouth, where, indeed, I always wished to spend this summer.

Mr. Bolingbroke evinced no surprise, and made

* M. de Saint Lambert, *Œuvres Philosophiques*, tome ii.

not the slightest opposition. Mrs. Bolingbroke was so much vexed that she could scarcely command her countenance: she bit her lip violently.

With respect to any arrangements that are to be made, I am to understand that you wish me to address myself to Mr. John Nettleby, said her husband.

No, to myself, if you please; I am prepared to listen, sir, to whatever you may have to propose.

These things are always settled best in writing, replied Mr. Bolingbroke. Be so obliging to leave me your direction, and you shall hear from me, or from Mrs. Granby, in a few days.

Mrs. Bolingbroke hastily wrote a direction upon a card, and put it into her husband's hand, with as much unconcern as she could maintain. Mr. Bolingbroke continued precisely in the same tone:

If you have any thing to suggest that may contribute to your future convenience, madam, you will be so good as to leave a memorandum with me, to which I shall attend.

He placed a sheet of paper before Mrs. Bolingbroke, and put a pen into her hand. She made an effort to write, but her hand trembled so that she could not form a letter. Her husband took up Saint Lambert, and read, or seemed to read.—Open the window, Mr. Bolingbroke, said she.—He obeyed, but did not, as formerly, 'hang over her enamoured.' He had been so often duped by her fainting fits and hysterics, that now, when she suffered in earnest, he suspected her of artifice. He took up his book again, and marked a page with his pencil. She wrote a line with a hurried hand, then starting up, flung her pen from her, and exclaimed—I need not, will not write; I have no request to make to you, Mr. Bolingbroke; do what you

will; I have no wishes, no wish upon earth . . . but to leave you.

That wish will be soon accomplished, madam, replied he, unmoved.

She pulled the bell till it broke.—A servant appeared.

My carriage to the door directly, if you please, sir; cried she.

A pause ensued; Griselda sat swelling with unutterable rage.—Heavens! have you no feeling left? exclaimed she, snatching the book from his hand.—Have you no feeling left, Mr. Bolingbroke, for any thing?

You have left me none for some things, Mrs. Bolingbroke, and I thank you. All this would have broken my heart six months ago.

You have no heart to break, cried she.—The carriage drove to the door.

One word more, before I leave you for ever, Mr. Bolingbroke, continued she.—Blame yourself, not me, for all this.—When we were first married, you humoured, you spoiled me; no temper could bear it.—Take the consequences of your own weak indulgence.——Farewell.

He made no effort to retain her, and she left the room.

Thus it shall befall
Him who to worth in woman overtrusting,
Lest her will rule; restraint she will not brook,
And left to herself, if evil thence ensue,
She first his *weak indulgence* will accuse.

A confused recollection of this warning of Adam's was in Mr. Bolingbroke's head at this moment.

Mrs. Bolingbroke's carriage drove by the window, and she *kissed* her hand to him as she passed. He had not sufficient presence of mind to return the

compliment. Our heroine enjoyed this last triumph of superior temper.

Whether the victory was worth the winning, whether the modern Griselda persisted in her spirited sacrifice of happiness, whether she was ever reconciled to her husband, or whether the fear of reforming and growing stupid prevailed, are questions which we leave to the sagacity or the curiosity of her fair contemporaries.

He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Let him now speak, 'tis charity to shew.

FINIS.



1

2



